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Transitioning from graduation to employment: unemployed graduate's experiences of finding employment

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. For the purpose of obtaining a Masters of Arts degree by course work and research report in Organisational/Industrial Psychology.

Declaration

I, Zinhle Kunene, declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Art in Organisational/Industrial Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has never been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research aims

This study aimed to contribute to literature by understanding how unemployed graduates move through the transition of graduation to employment. Using the Schlossberg's Transition Theory, the study explored the transition from graduation to employment from the experiences and realities of unemployed graduates that are navigating this transition. Through the application of this theory, coping resources as well as strategies that unemployed graduates utilise to secure employment in the external labour market were explored. Because of this purpose, the study was grounded on the premise of uncovering the experiences of moving through the transition of graduation to employment for graduates that are still unemployed rather than reporting the experiences of graduates that have successfully navigated the transition by way of attained employment.

1.2 Rationale

The persistently high unemployment rate, and more especially youth unemployment rate is undoubtedly one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges in South Africa (Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015; Van Aardt, 2012; Wikinson et al., 2017). Unemployment across different socio-demographic groups rapidly sharpened and continues to rise since the 1970s until now (Lam, Leibbrandt, & Mlatsheni, 2008; Van Aardt, 2012).

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) (Statistics South Africa, 2017), the unemployment rate in the last quarter of the year 2016 was 26.5 percent, up from 22.7 percent over a decade ago. In the same time period, the youth (aged 15 – 34 years) were the most vulnerable in the labour market with unemployment rate that is at least 10.6 percent above the national average at 37.1 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Of this percentage, graduate unemployment rate was 7.0 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2017). A closer inspection of graduate unemployment rate by age group reveals that in the year 2015, the graduate unemployment rate for those aged 20-24 was 8.3 percent, 10.6 percent for those aged 25-29, and 7.4 percent between the ages of 30 to 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

The current study aimed to explore the transition from graduation to employment from the experiences and realities of unemployed graduates that are navigating this transition. Around the world and in South Africa, extensive research about unemployment predictors, the extent of youth and graduate unemployment coupled with challenges of the unemployment epidemic, coping resources and strategies, the negative consequences of unemployment including affective individual experiences and societal effects, and the transition from graduation to employment have been conducted through quantitative research methodologies and strategies (Adeyemo & Ajufo, 2015; Ali, Ryan, Lyons, Ehehart, & Wessels, 2016; Ama, 2008; Anyanwu, 2000; Betts, Ferral, & Finnie, 2000; Cassidy & Wright, 2008; Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; De Witte, Rothmann & Jackson, 2012; Fallows & Weller, 2006; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Kraak, 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007; Statistics South Africa, 2017; Uddin & Uddin, 2013; Van Aardt, 2012; Van Schalkwyk, Niyimbanira, & Surujlal, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2017; Yu, 2013).

However, there is a lack of qualitative investigations into the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates. Furthermore, the experiences of graduates that have successfully navigated the transition from graduation to employment by way of attained employment have been explored and reported on. However, research exploring the experiences of unemployed graduates that are moving through the transition is not prevalent in literature. Thus, the current study seeks to fill in the gap in literature concerning the transition from graduation to an anticipated employment from the perspective of a sample of graduates that remain unemployed after having graduated in the last quarter of 2016.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to present a review of how unemployed graduates experience and navigate the transition from graduation to employment. This will be embarked upon by first reviewing literature that pertains to graduate unemployment, specifically in South Africa. To be precise, graduate unemployment will be defined and then the causes, effects of it on the personal and the societal level, as well ways in which it can be curbed will be discussed. Following this, a review of transition theories from graduation to employment will be presented, and the Schlossberg's Transition theory, including coping strategies that are encompassed by the theory will also be reviewed. Finally, the research questions of the study that emerge from the literature review are presented at the end of this chapter.

2.1 Youth and Graduate Unemployment

South Africa is no exception to the many countries both within Africa and internationally that are faced with the severe problem of unemployment (De Witte, Rothmann, Jackson, 2012). High unemployment rates in South Africa are amongst the most pressing socioeconomic challenges that face the government and the country at large (Wilkinson et al., 2017). Unemployment is defined by Uddin and Uddin (2013) as those people who are above the legally permitted age to attain employment who are without employment but are available for and are actively seeking paid employment in the labour market. In other words, unemployed individuals are those who are economically active who wish and prefer to work but cannot attain employment. According to Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012), South African youth, including those who hold graduate degrees, are increasingly failing to enter the labour market at desired rates.

The youth is defined as young people that fall within the age group of 15 years to 35 years (National Youth Policy, 2015; Statistics South Africa, 2017). For a discussion of youth unemployment, it is important to highlight that the youth transition to the workplace at different ages, although the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) (2002) legally permits the employment of children of and above 15 years of age. Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) not that 15 to 19 year olds are generally not economically active as a majority of them may still be in

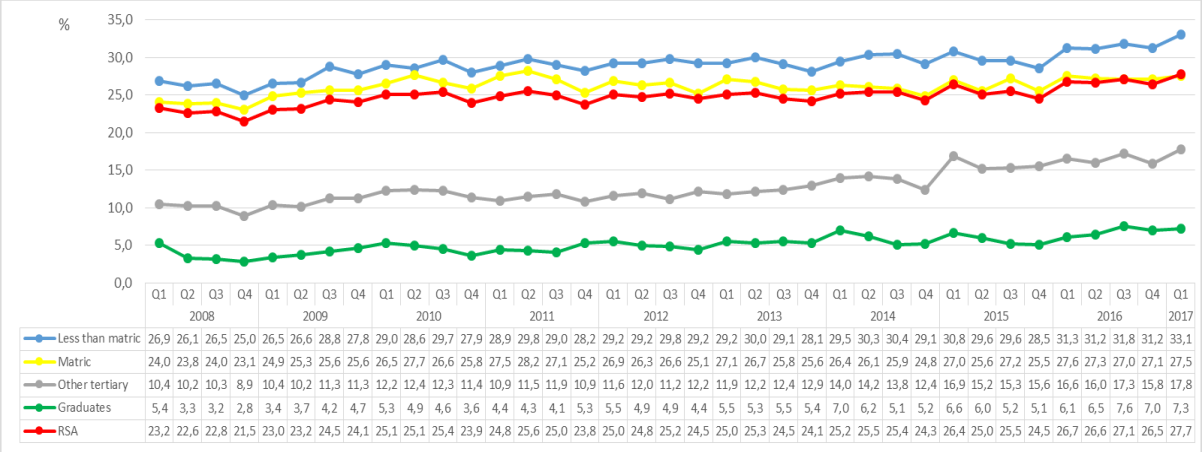
secondary school, and the BCEA protects children of this age group from being employed into particular jobs.

By the age of 20 to 35 years, young people move actively into the labour force, although they often struggle to find employment. Even within this age group, the rate of unemployment and transition to the work force differs. For instance, Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) note that unemployment rates for 30-35 year olds is the lowest at 33 percent, with 25-29 year olds at 42 percent while the highest rate was at 61 percent is 20-24 year olds.

In South Africa the youth remains the most vulnerable group in the labour market (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Statistic South Africa, 2017). The economic policy shift and demand for a highly-skilled labour force experienced by the country in the early 2000s necessitated a labour-force that is highly productive and technologically advanced (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015, Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Yu, 2013). This resulted in an insufficient demand for low-skilled youth which most likely do not possess a university qualification (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015, Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Yu, 2013).

Given this shift in the labour demand, it would be expected that graduates will be less likely struggle to secure employment after graduation. This, however, is not a true reflection of the expected case. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) (Statistics South Africa, 2017), the unemployment rate increased by 0.8 percent in the first quarter of the year 2017 to 36.4 percent from the last quarter of 2016. Of the 433 000 people who joined the labour market and were unemployed at the start of 2017, approximately 58 percent were the youth aged 15-34 years increasing the youth unemployment rate by 1.6 percent points to 38.6 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

The graduate unemployment rate remained at 7.3 percent from the last quarter of the year 2016 according to Statistics South Africa (2017). In the year 2015, a closer inspection of graduate unemployment rate by age group reveals that in the year 2015, the graduate unemployment rate for those aged 20-24 was 8.3 percent, 10.6 percent for those aged 25-29, and 7.4 percent between the ages of 30 to 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Figure 1 below graphically depicts this increase per year.



	Q1 2008	Q2 2008	Q3 2008	Q4 2008	Q1 2009	Q2 2009	Q3 2009	Q4 2009	Q1 2010	Q2 2010	Q3 2010	Q4 2010	Q1 2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Q2 2012	Q3 2012	Q4 2012	Q1 2013	Q2 2013	Q3 2013	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Q4 2014	Q1 2015	Q2 2015	Q3 2015	Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017
Less than matric	26,9	26,1	26,5	25,0	26,5	26,6	28,8	27,8	29,0	28,6	29,7	27,9	28,9	29,8	29,0	28,2	29,2	29,2	29,8	29,2	29,2	30,0	29,1	28,1	29,5	30,3	30,4	29,1	30,8	29,6	29,6	28,5	31,3	31,2	31,8	31,2	33,1
Matric	24,0	23,8	24,0	23,1	24,9	25,3	25,6	25,6	26,5	27,7	26,6	25,8	27,5	28,2	27,1	25,2	26,9	26,3	26,6	25,1	27,1	26,7	25,8	25,6	26,4	26,1	25,9	24,8	27,0	25,6	27,2	25,5	27,6	27,3	27,0	27,1	27,5
Other tertiary	10,4	10,2	10,3	8,9	10,4	10,2	11,3	11,3	12,2	12,4	12,3	11,4	10,9	11,5	11,9	10,9	11,6	12,0	11,2	12,2	11,9	12,2	12,4	12,9	14,0	14,2	13,8	12,4	16,9	15,2	15,3	15,6	16,6	16,0	17,3	15,8	17,8
Graduates	5,4	3,3	3,2	2,8	3,4	3,7	4,2	4,7	5,3	4,9	4,6	3,6	4,4	4,3	4,1	5,3	5,5	4,9	4,9	4,4	5,5	5,3	5,5	5,4	7,0	6,2	5,1	5,2	6,6	6,0	5,2	5,1	6,1	6,5	7,6	7,0	7,3
RSA	23,2	22,6	22,8	21,5	23,0	23,2	24,5	24,1	25,1	25,1	25,4	23,9	24,8	25,6	25,0	23,8	25,0	24,8	25,2	24,5	25,0	25,3	24,5	24,1	25,2	25,5	25,4	24,3	26,4	25,0	25,5	24,5	26,7	26,6	27,1	26,5	27,7

Figure 1. Unemployment rate by education status, Q1: 2008 to Q1: 2017 (*From Statistics South Africa, 2017*)

Graduates can be defined as individuals who have successfully graduated with a university qualification such as a degree, honours degree, Master's degree, and other higher qualifications (Oluwajodu, 2015). An unemployed graduate is defined as an economically active graduate who after graduation with a university qualification is currently and has been without work but is available for and seeking work in the labour market (De Witte et al., 2012; Uddin & Uddin, 2013; Van Aardt, 2012). This includes only graduates that have not had contractual binding paid employment or self-employment, who wish to work, but cannot get jobs in alignment with their obtained university qualification (Uddin & Uddin, 2013). Thus, unemployed graduates are those that are able to work, qualified through their university qualification(s) to work, and prefer to work but are currently without paid employment.

Graduates may be considered a vulnerable group that is confronted with the major life event challenges (Fishhoff & Wallis, 2002; Pool & Sewell, 2007). These major life challenges include dealing with unemployment upon qualifying in a fast-paced technology world whilst having to create a career in a labour market with decreased employment opportunities. This new labour market is characterised by shrinking job-security and necessitates personal responsibility for constant up-skilling, employability and lifelong learning and development (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010).

2.2 Causes of Graduate Unemployment

Uddin and Uddin (2013), Van Aardt (2012), and Yu (2013) suggest that the general attributes that influence unemployment rate are related to opportunity costs of employment, minimum wages and labour market rigidities, low economic growth-employment elasticity, overly protective labour laws, and structural imbalances in the supply of and demand for skilled potential employees. The persistently high rate of youth unemployment is said to be attributed to the area of residence of young people, skills levels and qualifications, ethnicity group, age, and the economic environment (Van Aardt, 2012).

A perusal of the available literature also shows that the graduate unemployment rates can be attributed to some attributes that are similar to both general and youth unemployment contributors (Kraak, 2015; Van Aardt, 2012). However, there are some attributes that are specific and unique to graduates. These attributes include, but not limited to, yearly university graduate rates, economic environment, graduates' expectations of finding employment and the mismatch between the skills graduates possess and those required in the workplace (Cassidy & Wright, 2008; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Uddin & Uddin, 2013; Yu, 2013). The following section will provide a discussion of some of the causes of graduate unemployment.

2.2.1 University graduate rates

Due to an increase in university enrolment in educational institutions over the last decade, the labour market is unable to absorb all graduates upon graduation (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Oluwajodi, et al., 2015; Uddin & Uddin, 2013). Owing to the shift and demand for high-skilled, highly productive and technologically advanced labour force (Oluwajodi et al., 2015), pupils obtaining a matric qualification pursue university qualifications as a means of enhancing their employability in the labour market. In the year 2013, 120 000 students enrolled within higher educational institutions and 89 percent of these students enrolled at one of the 23 public universities (Higher Education and Training, 2015).

The rapid expansion of university enrolment increases the supply of educated and qualified graduates which is above the demand for a skilled labour force in an economy. In a period of

weak economic growth, the capacity of an economy to absorb the large number of graduates is limited (Anyanwu, 2000; Uddin & Uddin, 2013).

The high school/secondary education system of South Africa, which is ranked 75th out of 76 (News24 Correspondent, 2017), has been criticised as failing to encourage entrepreneurial capabilities and/or other alternative ventures that might be available to young people as a way of establishing a livelihood (De Witte et al., 2012; Oluwajodi et al., 2015; Yu, 2013; Van Aardt, 2012). In relation to this, an argument can be made that young people are inculcated into a culture where a university qualification is seen as the only means to obtain employment in the labour market sustaining one's livelihood.

Youth entrepreneurship is a potential solution to integrate the youth into the open global economy and labour market (Ama, 2008). Furthermore, it is beneficiary to the youth and also the society at large as it creates more employment opportunities for other members of the economically active population, as well as increasing innovation and raising competition which might contribute to the economy of the country (Green, 2013; Uddin & Uddin, 2013).

Linked to the high rates of university enrolment is a concern that the field of study and the degree qualification graduates pursue have low prospects of acquiring employment in the labour market upon graduation (Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodi et al., 2015). The available research suggests that graduates who hold university qualifications from fields such as the Humanities and Arts struggle to acquire employment compared to graduates from technical fields such as Engineering and the Medical Sciences (Ama, 2008; Oluwajodi et al., 2015; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012; Yu, 2013). However, and in contrary to these findings, the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services (2017) of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) conducted a Graduate Exit Survey for the class of 2014 and 2015 and reported that of the 2 882 graduates that completed the survey who make up about 20 percent of eligible participants that graduated in those years, Humanities graduates (74 percent) secured employment faster and in large numbers as compared to the Commerce, Law and Management (72 percent), Health Sciences (72 percent), Engineering (56 percent), and Built Environment (56 percent) counterparts. This may suggest that the type of university qualification that graduates possess may not be predictor of employment prospects in the external labour market.

Furthermore, studies show that graduate unemployment is caused by the lack of acknowledgement that acquiring a university qualification without obtaining other relevant skills for the world of work is not sufficient for acquiring employment (Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodi

et al., 2015; Van Aardt, 2012; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012). In this regards, Van Aardt (2012) notes that "schooling is not a reliable indicator of capabilities, and low school quality feeds into poor workplace learning capacity" (p. 60). Obtaining a university qualification only gets graduates one step closer to obtaining employment upon graduation, it does not guarantee employment by any means.

Another prevalent cause of graduate unemployment as noted by Ama (2008), Kraak (2015), and Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) is the lack of employment opportunities information that is derived from one's social connections, networks, and social capital. We live in a world were acquiring employment in the labour market is dependent not only on obtaining a university qualification, but also having social capital such as family members and friends who, through their social networks can provide job referrals that would enable graduates to navigate their way through the labour market (Adeyemo & Ajufo, 2005; Ama, 2008; Kraak, 2015).

Generally, graduates from working class families have limited social capital and thus poor social networks to access information about employment opportunities and career choices as compared to their counterparts from middle class families (Adeyemo & Ajufo, 2005; Ball, 2010; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). This means that securing employment in the labour market is frequently determined by who the graduate knows that can be instrumental in their search for employment. In support of this view, Kraak (2015) reports that 13.3 percent of graduates secured employment in the labour market through their families and friends, whilst 6.2 percent graduate were headhunted as a product of their social capital.

2.2.2 Economic contributions

The global financial crisis and the weakening South African economy (Peyper, 2017; Oluwajodi et al., 2015) continues to contribute towards insufficient job opportunities in the labour market which poses extreme challenges for recent graduates to obtain and retain employment. It is noted by Mlatsheni and Rospabe (2002), and Yu (2013) that during financial difficulties within organisations, owing to the economic recession, young employees such as graduates are more likely to be laid off and/or not offered contractual binding employment opportunities. Furthermore, Oluwajodi et al (2015) and Salas-Velasco (2007) illustrate that generally organisations and employers are reluctant to hire younger graduates over older

graduates. This is evident by the 58 percent youth unemployment rates of the economically active population. Owing to this and as evident in Yu's (2013) study, the youth and by extension graduates become discouraged and demotivated to seek employment in the labour market. The repeated unsuccessful attempts to secure employment endured by graduates, especially upon obtaining a university qualification, demoralises the graduates seeking employment.

2.2.3 Graduates expectations of the labour market

Graduates in South Africa may reserve certain expectations about the labour market, specifically the type of employment for which they perceive they qualify for and related salary expectations. (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodi et al., 2015). Graduates are often inclined to expect high paying positions at the onset of their careers and as a result reserve a bad attitude to lower level positions (Oluwajodi et al., 2015; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012). This trend is observable with graduates that will choose to remain unemployed and refuse to settle for any other jobs that they perceive to fall beneath their expectation. Subsequently, the expectations that graduates have contribute to the high unemployment rate of the youth in the country.

Interestingly, the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services (2017) report that of 2 882 graduates that completed the survey, 69 percent of them upon obtaining employment earned salaries that were either in-line with or above their expectations. Furthermore, Oluwajodi et al. (2015) in their study of graduate unemployment in the banking sector found that graduate's salary expectation of R275 000 to R300 000 per annum is not outside the range of the salary bracket that employers in the banking sector offer their graduates as confirmed by a graduate recruitment manager.

In this regard, "unemployed graduates' salary expectations are therefore not different from what employers offer" (Oluwajodi et al., 2015, p. 06). These result should however be considered in relation to only the banking sector and thus cannot be blindly generalised to other industries. Each industry is unique, for example, industries such as Engineering, Health Science and Humanities may be expected to pay graduates differently owing to their differing graduate unemployment rates.

2.2.4 Employers expectations of graduates

Observable graduate unemployment rates result from a phenomenon termed by Van Aardt (2012) as structural unemployment, that is, unemployment that is fostered by a mismatch either in the geographical location of jobseekers or skills that lead to the inability of employers to hire people even at the peak of their business cycle. In the case of graduates, structural unemployment pertains to a lack of the right skill profile experience by many graduates (Van Aardt, 2012). Given the technological advanced world of work that necessitate high productivity, performance and efficiency, graduates are regarded by employers as inexperienced jobseekers that are a risky investment in the face of the global financial crisis (Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Van Aardt, 2012).

In Nigeria, Uddin and Uddin (2013) report that owing to the country's education system, graduate leave the university without having attained the right skills to allow them to secure employment in the labour market. They note that employers will employ people that will, in some way, improve the effectiveness of the organisation by helping grow through its profit margin. In this sense, graduates thus become a risky investment because they lack the critical skills that are needed in the world of work.

For entry-level positions that graduates typically apply for, employers are looking for basic skills such as intellectual ability, workplace skills, creativity and innovation, applied knowledge, analytical and critical thinking skills, and interactive skills (Ama, 2008; Griesel & Parker, 2009). However, as recognised by employers, graduates have been found to lack these critical skills and 'soft' skills such as communication skills, personal presentation and emotional maturity (Oluwajodi et al., 2015; Yu, 2013). Universities in this regards have been criticised for not equipping graduates with these critical skills for the world of work. Often those graduates that have had exposure to the world of work during their studies through opportunities such as part-time employment, internships, and work placements are upskilled with the relevant skills and empowered sufficiently so as to secure better quality employment in the labour market upon graduation (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Kraak, 2015).

On the other hand, employers can be criticised for making entry to the workplace impossible for graduates. Employers maintain a perception that graduates should be equipped with

workplace related skills without them actively working with higher learning institutions to provide opportunities for students to acquire these specific skills that otherwise will not be provided by universities (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). A degree of flexibility in the minimum requirements for entry-level graduate positions as well implementation of training programmes that will upskill the graduates to obtain such skills is proposed in this regards (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015).

This is especially true since graduates may believe that upon graduation they possess the right set of skills to secure employment from their theoretical and/or academic knowledge which may lead to the lack of awareness pertaining to the type of skill set required by employers in the external labour market (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). From this stand point, graduates truly believe that having been through university system and having successfully attained their qualification, they are well equipped with the relevant skill set ad are ready for the world of work.

2.3 Effects and the Impacts of Graduate Unemployment

Obtaining employment that is aligned with the university qualification possessed by a graduate preoccupies many graduates upon graduating. The failure to secure employment in the labour market may results in undesirable and sometimes irreversible outcomes, not only for the graduate but for the society and the country as a whole (Oluwajodu et al., 2015; De Witte et al.,2012).

2.3.1 Personal effects

When graduates find themselves unemployed, poor psychological, physical, and emotional health and wellbeing may follow (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2017). In their study of psychological consequences of unemployment in South Africa, De Witte et al. (2012) report that physical effects include, but not limited to, headaches, sleep deprivation, heart diseases, lack of energy, and hypertension; while psychological effects may include increased hostility, stress, anxiety, loneliness, emptiness, despair, fear, social isolation, and depression, suicidal thoughts, as well as decreased life satisfaction, self-esteem, status, confidence,

aspiration, and concertation levels. The experience of all these negative effects impacts upon the motivation and drive to actively seek employment, which in turn lessen the probability of unemployed graduates securing employment in the labour market (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015).

In the South African context, Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) have alluded to the impact that unemployment has on mental ill-health and poverty as areas of concern that require further exploration. Graduates from poorer households have added pressure to secure employment upon graduation so as to elevate the social standard of living for their families. Their failure to secure employment makes their experiences and personal effects of unemployment that much greater than those graduates from wealthier families (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). In addition to their own feelings of disappointment, they are faced with dealing with their family's disappointment, which may intensify the experience of all the other negative emotions.

Long-term unemployment and negative experiences of the labour market may increase risk behaviour in graduates and other young people (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Young people find themselves in desperate circumstances in attempts to maintain a livelihood when they are unemployed. In the attempt to survive, young people may resort to engaging in unprotected and transactional sex (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2017).

This may result in health-related issues such as the increased rate of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (Aids) infections especially amongst females, substance abuse, and engagement in other criminal activities which may include violent crimes among the age group of graduates (Wilkinson et al., 2017). The decline in health may thus lead to a decline in the quality of physical wellbeing of these graduates making it that much harder for them to find the strength and motivation to secure employment in the labour market (Uddin & Uddin, 2013).

De Witte et al. (2012) note that the negative effects of unemployment are worsened by perceived low sense of social support to help graduates navigate this transition. Being employed on the other hand has been illustrated by Coetzee and Esterhuizen (2010) to result in improved quality of life and health. It results in a positive sense of self-worth which thus fosters a positive outlook and optimism about life in general as well as promoting health behaviours and physical wellbeing (Coetzee and Esterhuizen, 2010)

2.3.2 Societal effects

Graduate unemployment not only impacts upon graduates themselves, but also their families, the community they are from and the broader societies of the country. De Witte et al. (2012) note that unemployment effects extend to the family who experience an increase in friction between parents, abuse (emotional, mental, and physical), family conflict, depression, and decreased family cohesion and financial wellbeing.

Graduates represent hope for uplifting the standards of living for their families and communities. As a result, families may have sacrificed their financial resources which may include applying for studying loans and to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), to fund graduates through university, with hopes of financial returns on their investment (Betts et al., 2000; Salas-Velasco, 2007). Evidence in 2017 suggest that the average student debt upon graduating with a four-year degree could be around R400 000 (Educonnect, 2017). Upon graduation when the graduate is unable to secure employment in the labour market, families and the whole community feel a sense of lost hope and herewith the vicious circle of poverty persist as the families of these graduates are faced with student loan debts that they are unable to repay (Hull, 2016; Lehohla, 2017).

Unemployment of the youth has been noted to be related to economic outcomes. For example, long-term unemployment of graduates with university qualifications impacts future wages and thus the economy stability of the country (Wilkinson et al., 2017). High rates of youth unemployment and by extension graduate unemployment do not benefit the economic status quo of South Africa. Unemployment translate into increased social inequality and alienation of the unemployed groups, which in turn translate into an underperforming economy and lower tax revenues for the government in the future (Mmesi, 2015). As noted by Mmesi (2015), this will inevitably result in low wages, unsafe working conditions and no social security.

Generally, any type of unemployment has negative consequences. However, De Witte et al. (2012) illustrate that unemployment may be characterised by positive factors and outcomes such as increased determination to secure employment which fosters employment commitment, coping resources and strategies, and may also strengthen the wellbeing of graduates through the effective utilisation of the granted free time. Unemployment increases leisure time and time to focus on other social and life activities that graduates typically do not have time for during their university years of studying (De Witte et al., 2012). However,

despite some positive outcomes, the negative outcomes of unemployment outweigh any gains as illustrated earlier.

2.4 Overcoming Graduate Unemployment

When graduates transition from university to being unemployed, that period is marked by a lot of frustration and feelings of disappointment. Despite these experiences, graduates persist to engage in job search behaviours in attempts of securing employment in the labour market (Ali et al., 2016). In order to successfully navigate this transition, graduates seeking employment, firstly attempt to cope with the state of unemployment with which they are confronted (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010). Secondly they engage in what has been termed application behaviour which encompass any efforts by unemployed graduates to enquire about available vacancies in the labour market and searching for job advertisements, submitting job applications, and presenting themselves to prospective employers (Adeyemo & Ajufo, 2005; Anyanwu, 2000; De Witte et al., 2012; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012).

Ali et al. (2016) provides an overview of factors that underline job search behaviours, the literature surrounding it, and the experiences associated with job searches. They note that contextual features such as the job search motivation and behavioural attributes of the job applicant play a critical role in job search motivation and behaviours and subsequent job search success. Graduates, upon attaining their university qualification, are highly motivated to secure employment in the labour market because all the years that they have pursued a university qualification. Behavioural attributes that underpin graduates' job search have been summarised to include individual differences with regards to personality, and demographic variables, that is, race, gender, and age (Ali et al., 2016; De Witte et al., 2012).

2.4.1 Government policies to cub unemployment

It is proposed that if the government exercise its constitutional role of providing adequate infrastructure by enabling the socioeconomic and political environment to foster labour market growth and encouraging external investors to invest in job creation within a country, then perhaps the labour market may be able to absorb the growing volumes of graduates that remain

unemployed upon graduation (Uddin & Uddin, 2013). This is paramount especially since it has been noted by Cassidy and Wright (2008), and MacGregor (2012) that investments for education are growing each year with the number of pupils that enrol with higher learning institutions upon the completion of their Grade 12 qualification to attain professional qualifications increasing. This therefore increases the number of graduates that seek employment in the labour market.

Investment in job creation once graduates have attained their university qualification, however, remains minimal (Uddin & Uddin, 2013). The National Development Plan of South Africa sets out a target to create 11 million jobs to reduce the high unemployment rate to 6 percent by 2030 (The World Bank, 2017). With estimated 600 000 new jobs on average that the economy should produce annually to meet this target, private firms have pledged the investments of R15.4 billion in order to create 4 675 jobs on average (Peyper, 2016).

However, job creation has been too slow with about 310 000 jobs created on average every year in the last decade; 265 000 by the private sector, and about 50 000 by the public sector (Peyper, 2016). For effective job creation to accommodate the growing numbers of graduates in the labour market, government and the private sector have to work alongside one another to curb unemployment in South Africa by maintaining the set target of 11 million jobs. To this Oluwajodu et al. (2015, p. 8) suggest that "government can help by proving graduate recruitment subsidies to improve the option of finding employment for young graduates".

Whilst it is easy to cast the responsibility for graduate employment to the government, universities have an equal role to play. Some university host graduate recruitment programs. For example, in 2014 the Wits Law and Management Faculty provided evidence that the Law School has a variety of career initiatives specifically targeted at Law graduates, such as individual organisation's showcase days and multi-day career fairs, over and above the career fairs that are organised by the university (refer to Appendix A). In this regards, graduates from other fields of studies that do not offer such employment engagement in terms of career fairs for their graduates' hinder their employment opportunities.

2.4.2 The Role of Employers and Universities to Ensure Workplace Readiness of Graduates Upon Graduation

University institutions and other higher learning institutions have been criticised for not adequately preparing graduates for the world of work (Adeyemo and Ajufo, 2005; Fallows & Weller, 2006; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007; Van Aardt, 2012; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012). Perhaps graduate unemployment rates can be curbed by a collaborative alliance between universities and employers to provide relevant and structured work experience exposure as part of the course syllabus of graduate's qualification. This will provide graduates with practical exposure to their courses and enable them to learn and acquire the related skills requirements of the world of world that may not be offered within their university qualification. In addition, these stakeholders can provide graduates with valuable social networks that they can rely on to navigate the labour market upon graduation, especially graduates that may lack critical social capital owing to their socioeconomically background (Kraak, 2015).

Upon graduation public employment schemes such as the National Youth Service, the Expanded Public Works Programme, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, and Community-Based Public Works Programme have to work together with the government to accelerate the development of relevant skills for graduates to be able to secure employment opportunities (Fallows & Weller, 2006; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007). At the present moment, these programmes have limited interaction with employers and as a result are not fully equipped to understand employer's skills requirements of graduates (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007). These skills typically relate to soft-skills which may include team work, public speaking, ethical behaviour, time management, and meeting conduct skills (Oluwajodu et al., 2015)

Above enhancing graduate's skill sets upon graduation from these programmes, employers together with higher learning institution can also provide relevant career guidance to graduates whilst in university to ensure that they choose courses and degrees that are in high demand in the labour market (Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Van Schalkwkyk & Surujlal, 2012). This may alleviate the growing reality and concern that all graduates, including Humanities students who struggle more than other graduates to obtain employment upon graduation.

2.5 Transitioning from Graduation to Employment

In recent years, the transition from graduation to employment has received relatively increased attention (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2012). For example, some scholars have investigated the duration between graduation and securing employment, and what characterises the transition period (Betts et al., 2000; Cassidy & Wright, 2008; Salvas-Velasco, 2007); whilst others like Van Schalkwyk et al (2012) have investigated the experiences of transitioning for graduates that have successfully navigated the transition by means of securing real job employment. The final body of investigated research has explored work-based programmes that aim to facilitate the transition (for example, Fallows & Weller, 2000).

Life after graduation is hard for many graduates. For many of them, it is expected that soon after leaving the education system they will enter the labour market, and that this transition will be relatively swift owing to having attained a university qualification (Ama, 2008; Salas-Velasco, 2007; Van Schalkyk & Surujlal, 2012). In this regards, the transition from graduation to employment is the time between leaving the education system and obtaining the first contractual binding permanent employment (or real job as phrased by Salav-Velasco, 2007) (Ama, 2008). Betts et al (2000) take this step further in their study by depicting the transition time as completed when a graduate has held a full-time permanent job for at least six months upon graduation.

From this, the time spent or the duration of the transition, the experiences, and what graduated students engage in to navigate this transition period become significant factors to consider when investigating graduate's transition from graduation to employment. Betts et al. (2000) analysed the time duration between when Canadian university graduates obtained their university qualification and when they secured full-time employment in the labour market. A majority of graduate's secure employment within a few months of graduating, the rest of graduate's secure employment over a duration of one year and three months (Ama, 2008; Anyanwu, 2000; Betts et al., 2000). Fallows and Weller (2006) note, however, that securing employment can sometimes take as long as three years following graduation. In Botswana, Ama (2008) reports that for graduates in the faculty of Social Sciences, 33 percent secured employment within the first four months of graduation, while 20.7 percent of them took between five and nine months.

Above 90 percent of graduates in European countries, across different field of study, secure employment within the first year of graduation (Cassidy & Wright, 2008; Salas-Velasco, 2007). In the United Kingdom, and as indicated by the sample in Cassidy and Wright (2008) study, 51.6 percent of graduates were employed between nine months to a year after graduating. However, of this percentage, 26 percent of the graduates perceived their jobs as below their qualification levels (Cassidy & Wright, 2008).

Some research reports that from the graduates that secure employment within the first year of graduation, a majority of them felt that the positions and type of jobs they secured were not appropriate to their educational level and career plans (Ama, 2008; Cassidy & Wright, 2007). Graduates find themselves forced to take any available employment position irrespective of the relevance of the position to their qualification and/or career plans because the labour market generates lower opportunities to secure relevant employment positions (Ama, 2008; Cassidy & Wright, 2007).

Given the statistics mentioned above, an argument can be made that graduates from developed countries such as European countries find it easier to navigate the labour market than graduates in developing countries like South Africa although Wits graduates report experiencing a much shorter period of unemployment as compared to those reported above. To be precise, 80 percent of graduates in 2014/15 secured employment within the first month of graduating, while 93 percent were employed in six months of graduation with the last 14 percent securing employment within seven to 12 months upon graduation (Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services, 2017).

Despite graduates across different countries experiencing a mismatch between their chosen career qualifications and employment opportunities for which they eventually settle, 80 percent of Wits graduates report securing employment in fields directly related to their studies (Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services, 2017). This trend is not replicated nationally and further illustrates the desperation of graduates to sustain a livelihood by attaining employment upon graduation as central regardless of their country. This trend of graduates settling for any type of employment whether or not it is aligned to their university qualification is prevalent in South Africa (Anyanwu, 2000; De Witte et al., 2012) as well as in other African countries such as Nigeria (Ama, 2008). To be precise, De Witte et al. (2012) reported that as much as 70.6 percent of graduates would rather accept any type employment (even if its below their qualifications) just to escape being unemployed.

In South Africa, Van Schalkwyk et al (2012) report that the transition period from graduation to employment can take slightly longer than a year. They note that "graduation from university does not automatically imply a transition to employment" (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2012, p.215). A significant number of graduates delay the transition by not immediately seeking employment in the labour market upon graduation. Rather some graduates will work part-time or return to university to pursue higher qualifications (Salas-Velasco, 2007; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2012). This trend is reported by the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services (2017) who illustrate that 18 percent of Wits graduates took up fixed term contract employment upon graduating, while 22 percent of graduates pursuing further studies. It can be argued that graduates resort to these alternatives as opposed to actively seeking employment in the labour market as means of mitigating their risk of becoming an unemployment rate statistic like other graduates who become part of this statistic upon graduation.

It is increasingly becoming clear that the South African economic climate is unable to absorb all graduates within the first year of graduation (Van Broekhuizen, 2016). The situation is so dire that graduates are forced to resort to extreme measures to secure employment upon graduation if they do not return to university. For example, in 2016 the Sowetan, Eyewitness News, and IOL online newspapers reported three graduates that resorted to begging on the Central Business District (CBD) main roads and busy intersections of Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Rustenburg (Eyewitness News, 2016; Madibogo, 2016; Mngoma, 2016).

The available research also provides evidence that biographic characteristics such as gender, age, university qualification, and particularly race in the South African context (Oluwajodu et al., 2015) are all contributing factors to the duration of the transition from university to securing employment in the labour market upon graduating (Ama, 2008; Anyanwu, 2000; Kraak, 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007). Evidently, younger male graduates who hold postgraduate qualifications such as Honours or Master's degree have a shorter duration between graduating and obtaining employment than their older female graduates with a Bachelor degree counterparts (Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007; Wilkinson et al., 2017). In the banking sector in South Africa, older graduates are favoured over younger graduates (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). Contrary to these empirical studies, older graduates were found to have a longer duration for obtaining employment relative to their younger counterparts in Salas-Velasco (2007) study.

One possibility for the pattern of results obtained in the study described above could be that typically employers associate graduates with younger rather than older people and as a result

may be biased to not be attracted to older graduates for entry level position. This may be because of the assumption that older graduates may have worked prior to obtaining their university qualification and thus have salary expectations which match the salary they once earned. Younger graduates are in this regards perceived as not having any work experience (Oluwajodu et al., 2015); and without salaried employment that they can benchmark employers proposed salary against, makes them a cheaper workforce than older graduates. Even with measures such as the Affirmative Action which is designed to redress past structural exclusion of designated groups from equal employment opportunities so as to ensure equitably represented in the labour market of diverse groups, African and/or Black graduates have the highest rate of unemployed in South Africa (Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Yu, 2013).

In this regards, the investigation of the transition from graduation to employment for South African graduates becomes critical for research. Research in this area has been undertaken from diverse theoretical frameworks and approaches including the labour mobility model (Sicherman & Galor, 1990), an integrated theoretical approach (Peila-Shuster, 2016), the survival analysis framework (Betts et al., 2000), the Cox proportional hazards model (Salas-Velasco, 2007), and the job search theory (Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012). The current study seeks to use the Schlossberg transition theory as a theoretical framework to explore graduates transition from graduation to employment within a South Africa context.

2.6 Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Thus far minimal studies underpinned by the Schlossberg Transition Model as a theoretical framework to explore to graduate's transition from graduation to employment have been conducted. The modern world we live in can be experienced by adults as inherently complex, unpredictable, and forever changing (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012; Bright & Pryor, 2008). Different factors such as social, demographic, technological, cultural, historical, and political domains necessitate change that adults have to transition (Anderson et al., 2012). Thus cognitive frameworks like Schlossberg's transition model facilitate insights into uncovering how adults explore, understand, adapt, and most importantly cope with life's transitions that bring about change in their lives.

In 1981, the first article to present the Schlossberg's transition theory was published titled "A model for analysing human adaptation to transition". The theory has received widespread attention from theorists and researchers in the social sciences and has evolved as a complex framework that has been revised and expanded upon (Schlossberg, 2013). It is influenced by four major theoretical perspectives, namely the developmental perspective of human development, contextual perspective of adulthood, life-span perspective of human development, and the transition perspective (Schlossberg, 1995; 2012).

The premise underpinning the Schlossberg's transition theory is that changes in adult life bring about transitions that often test an individual's ability to adapt (Schlossberg, 1981). From this, the development of a systematic framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and direct them to the help they need to cope came to being (Meyer, n.d.). Often categorized as an adult development theory, Schlossberg transition framework is beneficial for researchers when considering transition identification, the process of the transition, resources available to an individual dealing with the transition, and how these resources can be strengthened (Peila-Shuster, 2016; Schlossberg, 1999).

Terms such as crisis, transformation, and change have been broadly used to refer to a transition by some scholars in different contexts (Schlossberg, 1995). A transition, as noted by Schlossberg (1981; 1999), is any event or non-event that results in a change in oneself and the world that subsequently changes relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. This then requires a corresponding change in one's behaviours and relationships. The abundance of time that graduates find themselves having upon graduation and without employment, for example, represents factor that contributes to changes in their behaviours and relationships. Without the role of being a student that had shaped the graduate's routines for the duration of their university qualifications, they find themselves without a sense of purpose. This filters down to the assumptions that they make about themselves and the social world to which they find themselves.

Every adult's reality is shaped by different and specific age-group experiences, stages, and expectations. As such, some adults do not fit into particular life stages as suggested by some adult development theories (Schlossberg, 1995). Some adults of the same age-group might experience different stages that are not typical of their peers or have delayed stages due to unique circumstances.

However, whilst individuals differ in their personal attributes and circumstances, and their transitions across similar life event differ, Anderson et al. (2012) maintain that the structure of the transition is stable. All transitions comprise of three major phases: *1st*, approaching the transition, *2nd*, taking stock of coping resources in which individuals identify potential resources they can draw upon for a successful transition ("4 S's" system); and *3rd*, taking charge by strengthening one's resources (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981).

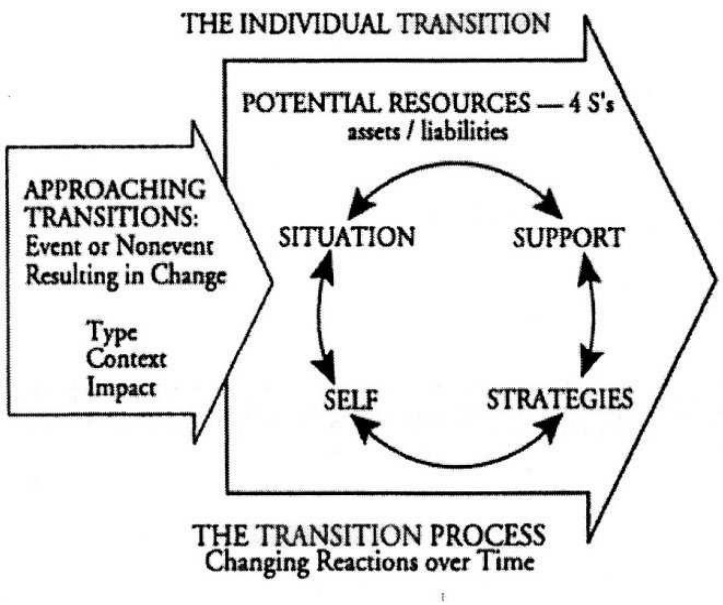


Figure 1. The Transition Framework (From Counseling Adults in Transition by Schlossberg, 1995, p. 68.)

The first phase (approaching the transition) is marked by identifying the transition and where one is in the transition process, so as to frame a suitable perspective to effectively manage the transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995). When identifying any particular transition that has happened or is currently confronting an individual, there is a need to examine the type of transition, the context to which the transition is taking place, and the impact of the transition on the individual's life (Schlossberg, 1995).

Types of transitions can be differentiated into four distinct transitions, namely anticipated, unanticipated, chronic 'hassles', and non-events. Anticipated transitions are expected and predictable events comprising of normative role alternations which occur in the course an unfolding life-cycle. Individuals can anticipate and thus have an opportunity to role rehearse for such transitions (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995), for example, leaving home or a student graduating from university. Unanticipated transitions, in contrast, are not predictable

nor scheduled events in one's life and an individual is not afforded the opportunity to prepare for them (Anderson et al., 2012). These events include unexpected occurrences that often call for social, emotional, or financial support in order to adjust to the transition. Examples may include being fired or the death of a parent who funds a student's university fees.

Chronic hassle transitions are continuous, recur and pervasive in their nature such as multiple failures to successfully complete a university course (Schlossberg, 1995). This type of transition can lead to an inability to initiate crucial changes that can aid in the successful completion of a transition because they erode the self-confidence of a student (Schlossberg, 1995). Non-event transitions are those that are expected and counted on by an individual but which do not occur at the time the individual expects them to, thereby altering the way an individual sees themselves and how they behave (Schlossberg, 1995). University students who expect to find employment upon graduation but who do not may serve as an example of such a transition.

This type of transition can be argued to be more stressful to manage but they tend to be less investigated when using life events approaches because not finding employment upon graduation is a non-occurrence of an event; it does not fit in the traditional notion of stress as reflecting some degree of change. In this regards, graduate's failure to find employment may mean a 'non-change', therefore not an event that results in the experience of stress (Schlossberg, 1995). Although there is some change because they do not go back to university. So the desired event did not happen but something still changed.

Non-events are further distinguished into four, namely personal non-events (individual aspirations), ripple non-events (unfulfilled expectations of others that affect an individual), resultant non-events (events that lead to non-events) and delayed events (Anderson et al., 2012). Unemployed graduates are going through a delayed non-event transition because there is still hope that they can still obtain employment (Ramashamole, 2010).

The context within which a transition is taking place is critical to consider because, as noted in Anderson et al. (2012), not everyone starts the same transition on the same level playing field. Opportunities and obstacles with which individuals are confronted whilst navigating a transition are shaped by contextual and individual factors that relate to the setting for an event. These include socioeconomic status, gender, geographic location, ethnicity, race, educational level, and area of residence. All these factors may have either direct or indirect influence on a

transition as they influence an individual's perception of the chances and options available to them (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995).

In understanding transitions, a distinction has to be made between a transition that is personal to the individual or as a result of someone else's transition in their life (Anderson et al., 2012). Events or non-events that happen to other people may also trigger transitions for individuals in their attempt to help those people with whom the event started. It is thus imperative to distinguish whether a transition is individual/personal, interpersonal or even public/communal (Anderson et al., 2012).

The last thing to be considered under the first phase of the transition model is the impact of an event or non-event on an individual. Impact refers to "the degree to which the transition alters one's daily life" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 52). Transitions have the ability to impact upon an individual's relationships, routines, assumptions about themselves and the world, and their roles (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995). For instances, graduate unemployment bares economic, sociological, and psychological consequences that are likely to alter relationships (loss of friends and other social support), routines (no longer a student, but have nothing to do), assumptions (feeling of inadequacy and questioning the role of university institutions), and roles (role ambiguity and uncertainty of place in the society). All of these factors that impact a graduate's transition from university to finding employment will require extensive coping skills if the graduate is to be successfully in transitioning the period of unemployment.

The second phase of the theory, which is the taking stock of coping resources segment, refers to the factors that influence the ability of an individual to cope during a transition (Figure 1) (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995). In this segment, coping resources are distinct as either assets or liabilities (when absent) that influence an individual's capacity to cope with a transition (Schlossberg, 1995; Peila-Shuster, 2016). Anderson et al. (2012), and Schlossberg (1995), note that individuals experiencing any form of transition have both assets (positive psychological resources) and liabilities (negative psychological deficits) within their psychic makeup that influences transition outcomes. The asset-liabilities ratio balance will inform different reactions to the same type of transition as experienced by different people in different times. When assets are perceived to outweigh liabilities, the transition may be experienced to be relatively easier than when the inverse is perceived (Anderson et al., 2012).

Individual's perceptions of their transition, that is, positive, negative, or irrelevant will influence how they feel and cope with the transition or non-event (Anderson, et al., 2012). This

will subsequently inform how the individuals assess their resources for coping with the transition. These coping resources include the "4S's" system: the situation, the self, support, and strategies. A transition (under the taking stock phase) with regards to the four factors mentioned, is best comprehended as a transaction between the transition itself ('situation'), the individual ('self' and 'strategies'), and the environment ('support') (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995).

'Situation' consists of the characteristics of the transition, such as, what is happening at the time of the transition (Peila-Shuster, 2016; Ramashamole, 2010). According to Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg (1995), individual's situations will vary with regards to the degree of influence they may wield. The degree of influence itself is a product of the following factors: trigger (i.e. what set off the transition), timing (i.e. the degree to which the time of the transition relates positively or negatively to the individual's life circumstances), control (i.e. the degree which an individual has influence and power over the transition), role change (i.e. the degree to which one's responsibilities, duties, and positions change as a result of the transition), duration (i.e. the degree to which a transition is perceived temporary or permanently), previous experiences (i.e. the degree to which previous transitions are similar to the current transition), concurrent stress (i.e. the degree to which other unrelated stressors influence the transition), and assessment or appraisal of the transition (i.e. the degree to which the transition is perceived as either positive, negative, or benign by the individual).

The 'self' as a measure of the 'individual factor' of a transition is characterised by two categories, that is, personal/demographic characteristics and psychological resources (Schlossberg, 1999; Peila-Shuster, 2016). Personal and demographic characteristics refer to socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, age and stage of life, ethnicity and culture, and state of health; whilst psychological resources refer to personality, ego development, outlook (optimism and self-efficacy), commitment and values, spirituality, and resilience (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1995). All these inform the different frame of references from which people will approach the same transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

'Strategies' refers to the individual's ability to recognise and modify their effective coping resources and processes (Anderson et al., 2012; Peila-Shuster, 2016; Schlossberg, 1999). Coping can occur before, during, or after a transition (Schlossberg 1995). Coping strategies are distinguished into three types: modifying the situation (such as negotiating the situation, seeking advice, or taking optimistic action), controlling the meaning of the problem (such as

responses that neutralize, positive comparison, or selective ignoring), and managing stress after the transition has occurred (such as denial, passive acceptance or withdrawal) (Anderson et al., 2012).

'Support' as a measure of the environment refers to the role that social support plays and options that help or hinder an individual in their transition (Ramashamole, 2010; Schlossberg, 1995). Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg (1995) categorise social support into three parts: types of support as classified by their source (such as intimate relationship, family unit, networks of friends, institutions and organisations that the individual belong); functional support which helps an individual mobilize psychological resources by providing affect (expression of liking), affirmation (expression of acknowledgement), and aid or assistance (exchange of things, money, information, time et cetera); and measurement of social support which relate to moving through life by giving as well receiving social support from others.

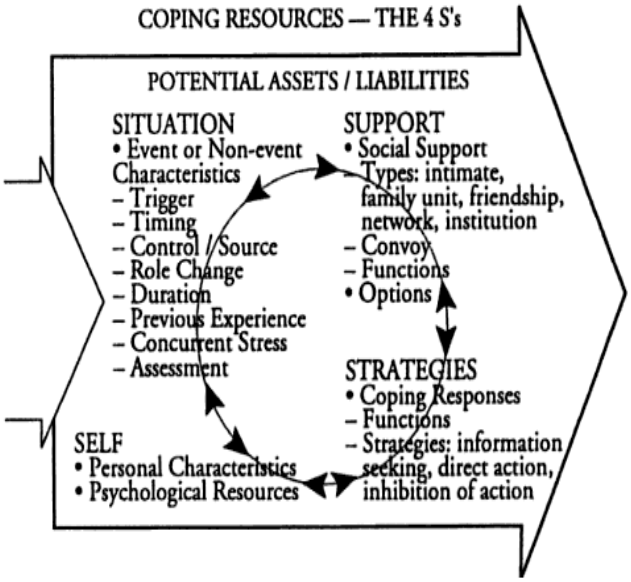


Figure 2. The 4 S's Framework. (From Counseling Adults in Transition by Schlossberg, 1995, p. 71.)

Lastly, the third phase (taking charge by strengthening one's resources) is marked by carefully thinking about an event or a transition and forming an opinion about it, such that you can decide on the appropriate action plans (Anderson et al., 2012). Effectively, during this phase "4S's" are evaluated and assessed as potential resources for managing the transition. Peila-Shuster (2016) highlights that when taking charge of the transition there can be aspects of the transition that are beyond the control of the individual. In this regards, individuals can gain some control and manage the transition by taking charge of strengthening one's resources.

2.6.1 Coping with transitions

The 4 S's system describes the factors that individuals draw from for effective negotiations of transitions. The situation, support, self, and strategies can be regarded as potential assets and/or liabilities that either foster or hinder coping. Whilst moving through a transition, individuals are required to let go of aspects of the self, former roles, and learn new roles which is achieved through coping with event that individuals perceive themselves to be in (Anderson et al., 2012).

In this regards, Schlossberg (1995) refers to coping as any tangible effort that individuals do to avoid harm and deal with life strains. With relations to Lazarus and Folkman (1987), Schlossberg emphasises that during a transition, individuals appraise the event in two ways. The first appraisal relates to the significance of the transition relating to the impact it has on the individual's wellbeing which can either positive, negative, or benign. Based on this, individuals undergo the second appraisal in which they identify the personal and social resources that are available to them for coping with the transition. It is at this stage that the 4 S's system – coping resources will be evaluated and drawn upon to select an overall coping strategy (Anderson et al., 2012). Coping is therefore "a process that is sensitive to both the environment and the personality dispositions, which influence the appraisal of stress and the resources for coping" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 31).

Furthermore, the coping strategies adopted can either be instrumental, i.e., changing the environment or situation to which individuals find themselves, or palliative, i.e., minimizing individual's emotional distress (Anderson et al., 2012). Based on the 4 S's coping resources, individuals can choose to inhibit action, seek information, direct action, or engage in intrapsychic behaviour (wishful thinking, distortion, and denial mind-set (Ramashamole, 2010). Therefore, by using these 4 S's in this study to investigate the experiences of unemployed graduates as they transitioning from university to employment, important coping strategies that they use to effectively cope with unemployment may be revealed.

2.6.2 Schlosberg's Transition Model Application

This transition theory has been applied by different scholars as a systematic framework to facilitate an understanding of adults undergoing different transitions and helping them cope with the transition. From conception, this theory has typically been applied to work orientated transitions such as changing jobs, work related relocations, promotions, retirement, and other career related transitions (Schlossberg, 2011). For example, this theory has been applied to career transitions in sport. It was used as a basis for studying retired athletes by Wheeler, Malone, Van Vlack, Nelson, and Steadward (1996) because it provided a framework to investigate the events surrounding the retirement decision with special attention to athlete transition and adjustment to retirement. Others, like Goodman and Pappas (2000) have applied this theory to investigate retirement transitions for university stuff. This theory was useful in this study because it allowed the exploration and investigation of the navigation process of the retirement transition by exploring the factors that contribute to the retiree's current life satisfaction as well as how they could be greater assistance to the retirees before, during, and after the transition (Goodman & Pappas, 2000).

In recent years however, there has been a steady increase in the number of studies that have applied this theory to the investigation of student related transitions. Pupil's transition from Grade 12 or secondary school to university, student's university oriented transitions, and graduate's transition from university to the workplace have been considered. Steyn, Harris and Hartell (2014) investigated the transition of black students who are completing the early childhood education qualification from secondary to university studies with an emphasis that this shift is a major developmental leap. Here, this theory was an appropriate framework to explore the experiences of students because the transition to university life has a dynamic effect upon the students. Student's experiences are impacted upon by the transition which calls upon the individual student's coping mechanisms (Steyn et al., 2014).

Ryan (2010) applied this transition theory to investigate veterans-to-student transitions as it "provides an adaptation structure to apply to a lifestyle change of this nature" (p. 3). DeVilbiss (2014) explored the transition experience of high school students to college for conditionally-admitted students using the lens of Schlossberg's transition theory in order to make sense of students' experiences, coping assets, and coping liabilities such that the university is better able to assist and retain transitioning students. These applications of this transition theory illustrate

that the theory is also relevant and applicable to university students as they too are confronted with adult development transitions whilst at the entry and duration of university years (Meyer, n.d.).

Students transition from university to the world of work has been investigated by some scholars, such as Kogan (2005), Kosugi (2004), Tomasik and Haase (2009), and Ryan (2001), however their investigation of graduate's experiences did not apply the Schlossberg transition theory. Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) applied various transition theories including Schlossberg theory to evaluate the challenges that are associated with the transition of graduates to the workplace as a study of student transition to the workplace. However, their application solely focused on graduates that have attained employment and depicted their entry level challenges relating to change in culture, lack of experience and skills required in the workplace, and unrealistic work life expectations.

2.6.3 Application of Schlossberg Transition Theory in the current study

From the literature reviewed, the Schlossberg's transition theory has not been applied yet as a theoretical framework to facilitate the exploration of graduate's experiences of the transition from university to employment whilst they are still unemployed. In addition, it has not been used to explore the coping strategies that they draw upon as they try to secure employment in the labour market. Schlossberg's transition theory as an adult development theory is applicable to all kinds of transitions and directs adults to the help that they may need in order to cope with transitions (Meyer, n.d.). As any transition process requires an analysis of both an individual's attributes and external circumstances, this theory will provide a practical way of assessing graduate's experiences of being unemployed upon graduation (Schlossberg, 1981).

A transition is defined so only by the person experiencing it and reflects the individuals own perceptions of the change that they are going through (Schlossberg, 1995). As such, in order to understand the meaning and coping resources of an unemployed graduate transition from university, it is essential to consider the type, context, and impact of the transition (Anderson et al., 2012). Different types of events that trigger transitions will have different meaning for different people, making a graduate's appraisal of unemployment very important.

In South Africa, noting the diverse variability of graduate's situations, this theory allows us to reflect upon some of the concerns that graduates may have which cannot be generalised. In this study, unemployed graduates trying to find employment in the labour market are taken to be undergoing a non-even transition, more specifically a delayed non-event transition. This is because there is a chance that they might still attain employment and therefore have unfulfilled expectations. Context refers to the relationship of an individual to the transition and the setting in which the transition occurs (Schlossberg, 1995). While impact refers to the degree to which a transition alters one's daily life in terms of the individual's relationships, routines, assumptions about self and the world, and roles (Schlossberg, 1995).

Therefore, a graduate's response to the transition of unemployment is dependent on the type of transition (anticipated, unanticipated, or non-event), the context in which unemployment occurs, and how it impacts their lives. In South Africa, noting the variability of graduate's situations, this theory reflects the different concerns that graduates have which cannot be generalised. Since a transition process requires an analysis of both an individual's attributes and external circumstances, this theory will provide a practical way of assessing graduate's experiences of being unemployment upon graduation (Schlossberg, 1981). The theory has further developed into a framework that illustrates and explains an understanding of the necessary coping mechanisms that are employed by adults during their transitions.

Following the review and discussion of the Schlossberg transition theory, it is evident that it is a useful and practical theoretical framework for investigating the experiences of unemployed graduates as they transition from university to employment. This is because the framework will allow for effective investigation and exploration of graduates experiences whilst they are unemployed in the labour market upon graduation. Additionally, the framework also allows us to uncover how unemployed graduates tackle and try to cope with the transition that they are faced with and highlight active behaviours that unemployed graduates engage in in order to navigate the transition from unemployment to securing employment in the labour market.

2.7 Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of unemployed graduates seeking employment after graduation?
2. What are graduates strategies for dealing with unemployment and looking for employment?
    a) What are the resources that graduates pull from for support in coping with unemployment?
    b) What elements define the situation (as described in Figure 2) of unemployed graduates?
    c) Who supports graduates in coping with unemployment and looking for employment?
    d) What are the job-hunting strategies that graduates use to obtain employment?

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter reviewed literature on the transition that unemployed graduates undergo upon graduation whilst they have not secured employment in the labour market as well as the theoretical framework that informs the study. The following chapter provides a description of the research design employed to conduct the current study in order to address the proposed research questions. It describes the methodology used to determine the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates that participated in the study. It describes the sample obtained and the sampling procedures used to obtain the sample. The qualitative research design that underpin the study and the techniques utilised in order to analyse the results obtained will also be discussed. Lastly, ethical considerations of the study will be discussed.

3.1. Qualitative methodology

Scientific research methodologies in the social sciences can typically be distinguished between two main broad categories, that is, quantitative and qualitative research. Each research methodology is characterised by distinct characteristics, techniques, strengths and weaknesses that are suitable to address specific research questions that researchers may choose to investigate (Marshall, 1996).

Quantitative research aims to produce results from a specific sample which can be generalised to a larger population through the testing of pre-determined hypotheses about a phenomenon (Marshall, 1996). In this way, this mode of inquiry is inflexible as the research study is stable throughout and is focused on high control of participant responses and the variables under investigation (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). It is therefore mechanistic due to its quest to understand and answer *'what'* questions. The responses of participants during the administration of questions do not determine subsequent questions that will be asked by the researcher (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, 2005; Marshall, 1996). However, the strengths of quantitative research are that its economical, allows for large sets of data to be collected which can in turn be generalised to the larger population (Carr, 1994).

On the other hand, qualitative research methodology according to Mack et al. (2005) aims to provide textual descriptions that will foster an understanding of complex psychosocial issues

and reality as experienced by the sample of any given research study. This mode of inquiry seeks to explore a phenomena and thus is more flexible and humanistic in answering the questions *'why'* and *'how'.* This allows for complex and rich understandings of the influence of demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, social norms, gender roles, and religion which shape the experiences of reality for a specific sample of people within a population to be acquired (Mack et al., 2005; Marshall, 1996). For this reason, qualitative research does not seek the generalisability of the results to any large population. It is flexible with the intended purpose to describe individual experiences and variations in the population, group norms, and explaining relationships for a particular phenomenon (Mack et al., 2005).

Furthermore, these two methodological approaches are linked to distinct epistemology paradigms. Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge or as referred to Babbie and Mounton (2001); the "critical reflection on the nature of scientific inquiry" (p. 20). Three epistemology paradigms informs social sciences research and can be linked to qualitative, quantitative research and participatory action approaches; these, positivist, interpretivist, and critical frameworks.

The positivist paradigm upholds that the social sciences are comparable with the natural sciences. The purpose of knowledge is to describe and explain, through the laws of cause-and-effect relationships between variables, and to predict phenomena that are experienced by people (Babbie & Mounton, 2001; Henning et al., 2004). Based on this position, quantitative research methodologies are rooted in the belief that the researcher and participants in a research study are independent entities as the researcher simply observes and explains objective truths about reality. According to Henning et al. (2004), within the interpretive paradigm, knowledge is constructed by people's beliefs, intentions, values and reasons, and self-understanding which the researcher explores in collaboration with participants. Thus the researcher and participants are dependent entities who engage in a specific context that shape the meaning of reality as experienced by participants.

The critical framework is rooted on the methods to deconstruct the world by drawing attention to the political nature of scientific inquiry (Henning et al., 2004). Through participatory action approaches, amongst others, this framework promotes the breaking down of institutional structures that shape the discourses of people's lives. In addition, these approaches are particularly attuned to the influence of power relations in maintaining and reproducing ideologies and social inequalities (Henning et al., 2004).

The interpretivist paradigm upholds that no single truth about a phenomenon can be uncovered because multiple realities exist. Through scientific methods such as qualitative research methodologies, an approximation of the truth can be uncovered (Henning et al., 2004). Knowledge construction is not only dependent on observable phenomena which can be objectively captured by the researcher.

Therefore, noting that the aim of the current study is to understand how unemployed graduates move through the transition from graduation to employment, an interpretivist qualitative research methodology will offer rich insight into the experiences of the participants as influenced by their unique psychosocial realities.

3.2. Research Approach

In order to understand and evaluate the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates that are navigating the transition from graduation to employment, the current study will utilise a qualitative approach that is exploratory and descriptive. This will provide familiarity with the topic of unemployed graduates experiences and coping strategies by describing the situations and life events in which these unemployed graduates find themselves (Babbie & Mounton, 2001).

This study will also employ a phenomenology approach as the researcher seeks to describe the transition from graduation to employment as experienced by unemployed graduates (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). This means that the study attempts to understand unemployed graduate's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of the particular situation they find themselves in (De Vos et al., 2011). Phenomenology approach holds the advantage that it describes the meaning and lived experiences of a situation as it is experiences by the participants (De Vos et al., 2011). The researchers who use this approach in their study of everyday world experiences and events distance themselves from their judgement and preconceptions about the nature of experiences but rather remains true to the participant's conscious experience of the transition to employment whilst the remain unemployed.

3.3. Instrumentation

3.3.1 Interview Schedule

In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants. This qualitative research technique employs face-to-face interviews on a specific topic with one person from the sample group at a time (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 2005; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2012). This technique was chosen due to the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study which sought a flexible data collection method that will uncover and encourage the participant to openly share their realities. In-depth-interviews explore the complexity of the meanings and interpretation that informs a research topic under investigation (Ritchie et al., 2012).

In-depth interviews are advantageous for this study because they offer rich and complex responses from participants. They allow the researcher to probe and fully explore the reasons, opinions, feelings, and beliefs that underpin participant's responses (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, n.d.). This is owing to the interactive nature of the in-depth interview data collection method. It is also attributed to the phenomena referred to by Silverman (1993) as *'interview society'* highlighting that participants have become accustomed to interviewing that when an invitation is extended by a researcher to share their realities, feelings, thoughts, deepest emotions, and personal life experiences; participants engage in the interviewing process freely and openly letting in the researcher into their world.

The interviewer is a co-participant in the interview as she/he is actively involved in encouraging the respondent to talk and converse about the research issue under discussion (Ritchie et al., 2012). According to Henning et al. (2004) an interview is a dialogic communication action in which the researcher prompts the participants to continue by using words of encouragement. Additionally, the researcher can also probe observed behaviours and actions as well as asking question which add to the rich data that researchers are able to collect from utilising in-depth interviews.

The 45 to 60 minutes long interviews were open-ended and semi-structured in which all the questions were asked of all the participants, but the order of the questions, the exact wording, and the type of follow-up questions varied considerably (Locke et al., 2010; Ritchie et al., 2012). Open-ended questions allow participants to provide their own suitable answer to a question instead of restricted responses like those provided by close-ended questions.

This encourages the participants to elaborate in their responses and also rules out any possibility of misunderstanding the participant. The duration of the interviews differed due to the depth of individual responses. At the start of the interview, the researcher created a relaxed and trusting atmosphere in order to encourage participants to feel comfortable enough to engage in this very sensitive and emotionally loaded.

Demographic questions such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, and year of graduation were included in the interview schedule and recorded by the researcher (Appendix H). This was done in order to accurately describe the sample. Interview questions are based upon the Schlossberg's 4 S framework (See Figure 1 and 2) and adapted from previous research (for example Ramashamole, 2010). Questions were based on the 'situation', 'self', 'support' and 'strategies' of the participant's experiences with the navigation of the transition from graduation to employment. The questions were aimed at demonstrating how Schlossberg Transition Theory can be utilised in assessing the coping strategies that these unemployed graduates utilised to cope with their transition.

In order to address the suitability and clarity of the interview questions, a pilot study was conducted with two recently employed graduates who indicated that they clearly understood the questions in the interview and that they were appropriate for the exploration of the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates that are navigating the transition from graduation to employment.

3.4. Sample and sampling strategy

The study targeted a relatively homogenous sample of unemployed graduates. This sample was recruited by means of non-probability sampling strategy. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), non-probability sample does not seek to be statistically representative of the whole population that the sample is drawn from. Instead, the sample that is drawn from a population is selected deliberately to reflect specific characteristics of the population that they researcher wishes to study. Precisely, in order to participate in the study, graduates must meet the following criteria. Firstly, they must be unemployed and have not been employed in the occupation they have studied and qualified for since graduation. Secondly, they must have graduated with a minimum qualification of a university degree. This means that everyone in

the population who does not match these pre-established criteria cannot be sampled for purposes of this study.

Specifically, purposive, convenient, and snowballing sampling techniques of non-probability sampling strategy were utilised to recruit the intended sample. The purposive sampling technique was appropriate for this study because in the exploration and understanding of unemployed graduate's experiences and coping strategies, it was paramount that only graduates with the specific feature that they are unemployed be sampled. Purposive sampling technique entails the deliberate selection of the most productive sample by the researcher. A sample which has socio-demographic characteristics or have specific experiences and roles which are chosen because they represent the central questions that the researcher wishes to study (Marshall, 1996; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Convenient sampling entails that once a purposive sample has been identified, the most accessible participants will be selected to represent the sample (Marshall, 1996; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). For this reason, the sample is most convenient for the researcher in terms of time, money, and effort. Furthermore, snowballing sampling technique is defined by Mack et al. (2003) as chain referral sampling. This is because it is a sampling technique in which participants or informants who have been contacted already for purposes of the study provide referrals based on their social networks of other people in the population who can also be sampled for the study (Babbie & Mounton, 2001; Mack et al., 2003). It is useful to recruit groups of the population that are not easily accessible, such as unemployed graduates. The researcher asked for recommendations from the participants that were interviewed to assist in helping locating other people who fit the criteria of the study. The participants who knew other unemployed graduates that would be willing to participate in the study, forwarded the contact details of the researcher to those people who then contacted the researcher personally.

The researcher first approached Recruitment Agencies that are based in Johannesburg to request permission to post calls for participants on their online communication channels. Of the three agencies that were approached, only one gave consent and permission to utilise their online communication channels (Appendix I). Unemployed graduate in and around the City of Johannesburg were targeted according to the criteria that is relevant to the research questions (Marshall, 1996). Participants were chosen to participate in the study on the basis that that have successfully graduated with a university qualification and remain unemployed to date.

However, the Recruitment Agency's online communication channels did not yield any participants that participated in the study. The researcher then approached people from her personal contacts and utilised her social network platforms to locate people that fit the criteria for the study. From this technique, a sample of ten unemployed graduates who participated in the study was obtained. The full details describing the sample are provided in Table 1.

In summary, the sample comprised of ten African participants, six males and four females. A racially diverse group could not be obtained despite all efforts to attain it. This could be in line with unemployment statistics of the country and in particularly in Johannesburg which reflect that African graduates are mostly affected by unemployment than their coloured and white counterparts (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The sample age ranged from 23 years to 36 years old. Two participants were based in Pretoria and the remaining eight from Johannesburg. Their lowest qualification was a university degree and highest qualification was a Master's degree. Their length of unemployment ranged from three months to four years. All the participants have held a variation of part-time employment, but they are not related to their qualification and thus are considered as still unemployed for purposes of this study. They are actively seeking employment in the labour market.

Table 1

Sample demographic characteristic

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Length of unemployment	Area of resident	Living arrangement
1	25	Male	African	1 year	Pretoria	Rented accommodation, alone
2	27	Male	African	8 months	Pretoria	Rented accommodation, alone
3	36	Male	African	2 years	Sebokeng	Rented accommodation, alone
4	27	Male	African	Since 2015	Soweto	Family house, alone
5	28	Female	African	7 months	Centurion	Family house with parents
6	26	Male	African	4 year	Fourways	Family house with parents
7	31	Male	African	4 years	Alexandra	Shared rented accommodation
8	25	Female	African	7 months	Vosloorus	Family house with parents
9	22	Female	African	3 months	Vosloorus	Family house with parents
10	24	Female	African	1 year, 6 months	Palmridge	Family house with parents

3.5. Procedure

First, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee. Once ethical approval has been gained, the researcher approached Recruitment Agencies (Appendix B) were approached to request that they post invitations on their websites to recruit participants for the purposes of conducting this study. At this stage the participants that meet the selection criteria of participation in the study were handed the participant information sheet (Appendix C) which officially introduced them to the researcher, the intentions of the research, and were be made aware of the purpose of the study.

The researcher then notified the participants that they are not obliged to take part in the study and that nothing will be held against them if they withdraw from the study. Consent forms were handed out with all the details of the study that participants need to be aware. Three consent forms were handed to participants for their consent, that is, consent for the interview (Appendix D), consent for audio recording the interview (Appendix E), and lastly consent for using quotes

in the research report (Appendix F). Participants were given enough time to ask questions for clarity. This process was administered in a language preferred by participants, in this case English.

Participants were also given guideline questions that were guide the semi-structured interviews. Anonymity was ensured as no identifying information was used in the reporting of the research findings

All ten interviews that were conducted were recorded on an electronic audio recorder and then saved onto a password secured computer. Thereafter, all the interviews were transcribed word for word by the researcher and one assistant. The researcher briefed the assistant on the purpose of the study, the format that should be followed in transcribing the interviews, and provided with an example of a transcribed interview. The assistant was informed that she cannot discuss the data with anyone else outside of the transcription. All the interviews that were transcribed by the assistant were later verified and modified by the researcher if necessary in order to ensure accuracy of the research data.

3.6. Data Analysis

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher and one assistant. The transcripts served as data for this study. In order to analyse the data, a thematic content analysis, which is guided by an essentialist or realist epistemology approach, was used. It is a widely used qualitative analytic method within psychology that it can be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis that is not tied to any particular theoretical framework and thus can be adapted for use in any theoretical framework as done in this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis interprets various aspects of the research topic because it identifies, analyses, and reports patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). It organises and describes data in rich details as noted by Braun and Clarke (2006). The thematic analysis employed in this study is an essentialist or realist approach because it seeks to report accounts of participants' experiences, meaning and reality in a straightforward manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the Schlossberg's 4S framework that was applied in the interview schedule postulate that themes were theoretically developed

based on this framework. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this is top down theoretical approach. However, themes were not only identified from the data only based on the 4S framework. This means primarily themes were coded specifically in line with the theoretical framework, but room was left for themes to evolve outside the 4S framework.

A theme suggests something importance about the data in relation to the research questions and represents a certain level of patterned responses within the data set (Braun & Clark, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). A theme can be derived from two levels as adopted in this study. At the manifest level where patterned responses are observed directly from the dataset (Ramashamole, 2010). That is, themes that are specifically derived from the data as informed by the interview schedule which is based on the 4S framework. Themes can also be derived at a latent level where patterns of influences underlying responses can be converted into categories (Ramashamole, 2010). This is crucial as the study was further guided by the personal views of participants. This is because relying exclusively on one level of analysis can sometimes leave some information not analysed which could be potentially a theme. Therefore, an effective thematic content analysis seeks to be descriptive at the onset and then interpret in order to capture both manifest and latent level of theme extraction (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

The thematic analysis in this study was carried out as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. The first step entailed familiarising with the data which was achieved through the process of transcribing the recorded interviews. At this stage, the researcher read and re-read the data and noted initial ideas about the data. Then the researcher coded interesting features of the data that related to the 4S framework across the entire dataset. Prominent codes were then collated into potential themes. The themes were then reviewed by checking them in relation to the coded extracts and the whole dataset. Reviewing and refining the specifics of each theme was then engaged upon by providing clear names and definitions of themes in order to represent extracts for that theme. Finally, vivid and compelling extract representing each theme in relation to the research questions and literature of this study were selected to produce this report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Before the study could begin, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (MORG/17/004 IH) (Appendix G). Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants were provided with an information sheet which outline all the information regarding the study and their right to choose whether or not to participate with no penalties or negative consequences for either choice. Participants then signed three consent forms, that is, participation, voice recording, and using quotes in the report consent forms. All participants were provided with the contact details of the researcher as well as her supervisor.

Anonymity was guaranteed as no identification information was required from the participants. Also, confidentiality was maintained by restricting access to the research materials to any person other than the researcher and her supervisor. There were no foreseeable risks to participants who participated. However, participants were reminded if any of the issues raised in the interview and/or observation may have raised concerns for the participants, they were provided with the contact details for South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) whom they could contact for assistance. A summary of the results will be provided to individual participant of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter above chapter outlined the research method that was used by the researcher to conduct the study. This chapter will present as well as discuss the research findings. This will be embarked on by first presenting the key findings of the thematic content analysis and also noting the differences in themes within the data. In accordance to the research aims and questions, the themes in this study will be organized and presented according to the Schlossberg' 4S's Transition Framework.

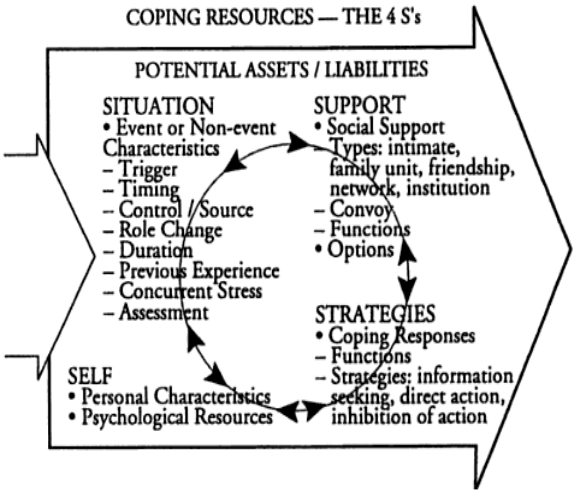


Figure 3. The 4 S's Framework. (From *Counseling Adults in Transition by Schlossberg, 1995, p. 71.)*

For each theme presented, data extracts in a form of quotes will be provided in order to offer evidence of the prominence of that particular theme within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, for some themes, additional subthemes that underline and expand on the main theme will be presented. Following this, key findings in relations to the themes will be discussed by demonstrating the implications of the findings.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants, data extracts will be presented without the participant's names or any other identifying information. In this regards, participant's responses that will reported as extracts from the data will be presented and distinguished by the use of numeric symbols, that is, Interviewee 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

The primary aim of the study was to understand and evaluate the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates that are still navigating the transition from graduation to employment using the Schlossberg's Transition Framework. As such, in order to participate in the study, participants had to have obtained a minimum Bachelor's degree university qualification and have not been employed post-graduation to date. Further, it was important that the graduates identified the circumstances that they find themselves in, that is, graduated but remain unemployed in the labour market as a transition.

The type of transition that the participants in the study are undergoing is referred to by Schlossberg (1999) as a nonevent transition which was expected by the graduates but had been delayed at the time of being interviewed by the researcher. The transition that the graduates are undergoing further impacts and subsequent altered their roles, assumptions, routines, and relationships.

According to Schlossberg (1999), alterations in one's life are attributed to the magnitude of the transition, that is, major transition will alter one's life completely in relation to their roles, assumptions, routines, and relationships and minor transitions may not necessary change all of them. Arguable, in this study, the magnitude of the nonevent transition does not offer adequate explanation for varied change in aspects of graduates lives. This is because unemployment in South Africa is a prominent problem with undesirable and sometimes irreversible consequences not only for the graduate, but also the whole country (De Witte et al., 2012; Oluwajodu et al., 2015). In this regards, anyone who finds themselves unemployed at any stage in their lives can be argued to be undergoing a major transition because of the impact the transition has.

With the establishment that all the participants in the study undeniably identified and acknowledged the transition that they are undergoing as a nonevent transition of unemployment that would end upon securing employment in the external labour market.

> *So transitioning (thinking)… from, being a graduate to being unemployed takes so much (…) And that's not obviously an easy thing to do. It's not an easy transition…* (Interviewee 1).

> *I think, the transition is, let me put it like this because I like making practical examples… the same as transition from primary school to high school, from high school to tertiary, and from tertiary to unemployment…(laughs)…* (Interviewee 4).

The following sections will explore the themes that emerged from the data in relation to the Schlossberg Transition Framework (figure 3). The study will discuss the 4S framework sequentially from the 'situation', the 'self', 'support', and then lastly the 'support'.

4.2 Situation

In the attempt to explore the 'situation' that participants find themselves in, they were asked general questions about the kind of situation they are facing as unemployed graduates trying to navigate the transition from graduation to employment. As a starting point, participants were asked to describe their full experience of being an unemployed graduate. Similar experiences were described by the participants with a slight variation in terminology and discourse. A predominant theme of feelings of frustration informed their overall assessment of their situation.

4.2.1 Characteristics of the transition

The Transition Framework by Schlossberg (1999) specifies that any transition will have characteristics which may include the trigger of the transition, control, duration, role change, timing, concurrent stress, previous experience with a similar transition, and assessment of the transition (Figure 3). In the following sections an exploration of these characteristics of the 'situation' will be embarked on. In the study, the trigger of the transition was graduating from university and the duration is how long they have been unemployed thus far.

Transitions do not have a technical end point in the sense that the transition stops, transitions are continuous processes over time (Anderson et al., 2012). The graduate's unemployment transition was defined has ending upon finding employment in line with the criteria of participating in the study. Specifically, any graduate who has secured employment in the labour market was excluded from participating in the study.

Furthermore, it was difficult to operationalize the timing of the transition in the study. Research indicates that students enroll in higher learning institutions in order to heighten their employability in the labour market which will enhance their odds of securing employment upon graduation (Anyanwu, 2000; Uddin & Uddin, 2013). Although graduation does not guarantee

employment in the labour market, it at least increases the odds of successfully securing employment in the labour market (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Statistic South Africa, 2017). Thus, the timing was common for all graduates as it commenced at the end of their studies. Likewise, all the participants indicated that they were actively looking for employment with no plans of travelling for instance which would have lessen the impact of unemployment, even making the timing of it to be good.

4.2.1.1 Concurrent stress

When participants were asked about other stress that they might be experiencing in other areas of their lives because of being an unemployed graduate, the following themes emerged.

4.2.1.1.1 Relocating back home

The main theme that emerged from the data was that of having to relocate back home upon graduation. All the participants indicated that they had stayed in student accommodation, whether it was a university student residence or a rented student accommodation in the city where the university was located. For instances, students that enrolled at the University of Johannesburg or the University of the Witwatersrand rented student accommodation at Braamfontein in order to be closer to the university as their home town is far from university and thus not practical to commute to university on a daily basis.

> *…And especially if you then have to move back home. That's a completely even more frustrating state to be in.* (Interviewee 1).

> ***Interviewer:*** *Did you move back home?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *I did.*
> ***Interviewer:*** *And how was that experience of coming back being unemployed with a good qualification?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *Well! It was something else hey. Adapting to the environment back home again… To going back to a place where by you have to report when you want to come back home late or when you want to use the car, you have to report where you going, you know stuff like that it was quiet an adjustment* (Interviewee 2).

> *We go back home; everybody goes back to where they come from* (Interviewee 6).

Moving back home is a common reality for many graduates who find themselves without employment upon graduation. Somerville (2017) in the working paper about 'Labor Market Dynamics and Moving Back Home' indicated that there is a large body of empirical literature concerning young adults moving back home as a result of difficulties finding employment in the external labour market. This is further supported by the evidence in a form of a narrative from a graduate who has had to move back home upon graduating in Somerville (2017) online newspaper article. She indicates that there is indeed a growing number of graduates that are moving back home after university and that she is therefore not the first graduate to move back home and is probably not the last.

These findings from the study therefore illustrate that having to move back home upon graduation is secondary stressor to being unemployed. After graduating from university and without any prospects of employment, there is no reason for graduates to continue occupying their student accommodation facilities because of a couple of reasons. Student accommodation is reserved for registered students of a higher learning institution (University of the Witwatersrand, n.d.), and upon obtaining their university qualifications, graduates who choose not to further their studies or have completed their qualifications do not register with the institution anymore. This makes them non-students and thus not permitted to occupy student accommodation residence of the university.

Secondly, graduates who still want to occupy rented student accommodation around the city where the university is located must ensure that they have the funds necessary to pay for the accommodation monthly rent (South Point, n.d.). As illustrated by the participants in study, most families do not afford the funds to continue paying for rented accommodation upon graduating.

> *…But I get that I don't have anywhere else to go and if I leave this house who's going to finance me because my dad is already like 'I get that you here, the little that I give you should at least maintain you. So if you want to go and I still have to maintain your allowance, I have to pay for your place you not a student'. It's different when you are not a student. So let's rather invest that money and you don't go and stay at an accommodation* (Interviewee 9).

It is easier and financially sound to have the graduates return home. Additionally, returning home upon graduating and without employment has other benefits like the provision of support from loved ones to enable them to cope with the nonevent transition (as will be covered in later themes). However, moving back home poses unique challenges and experiences for the graduates as uncovered by the study. It is not something that graduates look forward to, especially since they are returning home as unemployed graduates after a couple of years of not permanently residing at home. Therefore, the theme of relocating back home as a concurrent stress can be expanded to include two additional subthemes that relate to the expectations that the graduate's families, and the community reserve.

4.2.1.1.1 Family expectations

There were participants who indicated that upon graduation, their families also had high expectation of them. Families of graduates invest and to some extend sacrifice a lot in the education of their children with hopes that upon graduation, the graduates will be better off in the external labour market and thus contribute back to the family.

> *… especially as a black person the one thing that your family goes on about is that go get an education…go graduate, do this, do that. Your parents like to set goals for you and they think it's going to help but sometimes it just doesn't. Like when they say when you have graduated you can do this and that* (Interviewee 5).

> *You feel like that you have disappointed your parents. The amount of sacrifices that they had to make cause when you go to study everybody in the family feels it. (…) You come back and all the expectations in the family, not just now your mother, your father, and siblings but everybody now, the extended family. It's almost as if you killed something in them, the expectations that they had of you* (Interviewee 1).

To some families investing their financial resources which may sometime mean burying themselves in debts from taking study loans is their way out of the vicious cycle of poverty (Betts et al., 2000; Salas-Velasco, 2007). When the graduates move back home without any prospects of employment and remain in that nonevent transition, families lose a sense of hope which manifest in disappointment and other negative emotions (Hull, 2016; Lehohla, 2017).

However, not all unemployed graduates face the same feelings of disappointment and expectation from their families. Some graduate's family understand that the state of the external

market and the economy of the country is unable to absorb all graduated graduates and therefore do not have high expectations for their graduated children.

> *…For people who get pressure is because most of their family is looking up to them. I'm just me at home nobody cares if I'm working or not. (…). but my family understands and in most cases you will find that it's does families who never had anyone goes to higher institution. They don't know what it's like they just working at franchise, they don't know. If they knew they wouldn't say such things. (…). So it's not really that much of a burden to my mom (*Interviewee 10).

4.2.1.1.2 Societal expectations

Moreover, even the society and/or community in which the graduates and their families are part of at home reserves expectations for graduates. In the study the type of expectations from a societal level can distinguished into two. The first type of expectations is rooted in negative undertone from the society which looks down upon graduates who have returned home as a result of not being able to secure employment in the labour market upon graduating.

> *And you then coming back to that world and it's almost as if they look at you as if, really! Did you think that you are going to be better than us? (…). then you get these people telling you that have you been looking? As if you haven't been looking* (Interviewee 1).

> *So now if you go to rural areas, people will make example of you. Look you want to go to school, that's the end result. It's not good* (Interviewee 3).

> *I think the society is the one that is putting too much pressure on us* (Interviewee 4).

> *They set bars for you because now you are a graduate you should be something… You should be driving your own car by now. You should be earning a huge amount of money, etc. So yeah there are misconceptions. (…). They don't see the importance of why you went through that to begin with because you are back at it. You are the same as everyone else in the township who didn't study. (…). They don't look at it in a broad perspective because they expect that as soon as you finish, companies should be looking for you, you know. Headhunted by companies. But then that's not the case.* (Interviewee 8).

> *… I'm even afraid to go out of the house because people are going to say, yeah you see when you go to school, you will be like him (laughs) (implying that you will struggle finding employment). (…). it's kind of embarrassing. People expect you to (pauses)… oh you went to school and they expect you to find employment and you not finding employment.* (Interviewee 6).

> *It's like everyone is now looking up to me and I don't work. They get surprised they will say "where are you"? then I tell them that I'm just chilling at home. They like, oh we thought you were working. There is that social pressure. You went to school for three years, so now we expecting you to buy us cold drink and give us R20. But, I don't work. I still have to explain myself to the society that I'm trying to get work and stuff. So I feel like socially, that's where I get pressure from* (Interviewee 9).

As illustrated above, society looks down upon graduates that have returned home after graduation without being employed. They are disappointed and that further put the graduates under pressure as they feel the sense of letting everyone down. This can be attributed to a collective cultural worldview to which some South Africa communities ascribe. Communities that embrace the spirit of humanity "Ubuntu" which is opposed the Western individualistic culture, uphold that is takes the whole community to raise a child (Masango, 2005; Mohamed, 1996). Thus when the child of the community faces adversity in the form of not finding employment, this will impact the whole community because it has invested emotional, psychological, spiritual, and financial support and resources in the upbringing of the child. In these communities, "the aggressive 'me first' individualism is replaced by a gentleness and an understanding that all of us whether man or woman, black or white – are members of a supportive, caring learning community" (Mohamed, 1996, p. 61-62).

The second of these is rooted in positive undertones which appreciate and indorse the accomplishment of obtaining a university qualification by unemployed graduates.

> *…it's like everyone is now looking up to me. (…). everyone is looking indirectly and directly at what is happening to this graduate so to say, because now I'm labelled as that. There's kids that look up to me and what not. So it's that thing to say I want to be like you* (Interviewee 9).

> ***Interviewer:*** *…And people would actually try and make you feel bad, like they would feel like you some kind of disappointment.*
> ***Interviewee:*** *And they should have actually thanked you because most kids are studying because of you, most kids are still in school because the want to be like you* (Interviewee 10).

For these graduates, their communities see them as positive role models to preceding generation of kids. For example, Mfundo Radebe and Sasasa Dlamini from Kwa-Zulu Natal province became celebrated role models in the country for being accepted at Harvard University (Brand South Africa, 2017; The Good Things Guy, 2015). This suggests that no matter how looked down upon graduate unemployment is in the society, pursuing education is still celebrated by those who value it. Herewith, unemployed graduates should keep their heads held high for they have an accomplishment of a prestigious qualification that many others in the community do not have the opportunity of attaining (Arendse, 2011).

4.2.1.1.2 No other stress

Some graduates did not experience any other additional stress simultaneously with being unemployed.

> *So beside job security, (thinking)… so I don't necessary have dependents or people who depend on me. I don't have a child. My family or my mother and father are somewhat well-off, (thinking)… I don't necessarily have to contribute to the family* (Interviewee 1).

4.2.1.1.3 Financial stress

Some other graduates expressed experiencing immense financial stress. This comes as no surprise because the unemployed status means that one is unable to generate income. Without any other source of income, one is therefore expected to experience some financial strain at some point in their lives (Osei-Hwedie, 1996).

> *Yeah, it's stressing sometimes you don't have enough funds. (…). I've got a family. I have a son and a wife so taking care of their needs is a big problem. It's a hectic (*Interviewee 3).

> *I need to support my family, my mom. I just need to work for her, that's what I need to happen at this moment* (Interviewee 7).

> *I've got money issues. It's not even a joke* (Interviewee 9).

> *Yeah because sometimes your parents would give you a certain amount of money and you want to do a lot of things. But you can't afford to and they will not give you more money because now you are not at school anymore* (Interviewee 2).

The reasons for the additional stress that unemployed graduates experience seems to fall into two categories. On the one hand, the root of financial stress is from the need to financial support the family. Interviewee 3 and 7 both had immense pressure to provide financial assistance to their families and this subsequently resulted in the experience of stress. While Interviewee 2 and 9 have financial stress for personal reasons that relate to their quality of their lives.

> *Because I have a support structure, I don't have to worry about rent, I don't have to worry about certain things. I think my problem, you know when see you looking sad and think you want a hug. I don't want a hug; I need some money. So it's the whole money thing. I don't have to worry about where I stay, I don't have to worry about what I eat, I don't necessarily have to worry about a lot of thing like getting around because I have that support.* (Interviewee 5).

4.2.1.2 Previous experience with a similar transition

To explore this characteristic of the 'situation', participants responded to questions about attempts they had made prior graduating to look for employment. Specifically, they were questioned as to whether they had looked for employment during their university years. The responses to these questions suggested a mixture of job seeking behaviours at university.

4.2.1.2.1 Did not look – Finding employment will be easy!

> *hmm… yes I mean it doesn't consume you like you said when you are still a graduate, because (thinking)… you are still in the illusion that the world owes you something, you know. Jobs should be easier to find, you know. You stand tall, you stand with such confidence. This is the other assumption that you now need to break in your head that jobs are not necessarily easy to find* (Interviewee 1).

> *I didn't really look for employment as much when I was studying. I think for me it was just one of those, I'm in study mode so I want to finish this and I will look for positions once I am done with studying* (Interviewee 5).

These graduates that did not start looking for employment whilst at university seem to share a common assumption that finding employment post-graduation should have been easy. If the unemployment rate of the country is anything to go by, these graduates can be argued to have

been in the illusion that obtaining a university qualification would increase their employability than those who do not possess such qualification. This is arguable an illusion that put graduates that sought employment upon graduation a step behind other students that started seeking employment in the labour market whilst at university.

Those graduates that started their search for employment whilst at university had resources in the palm of their hand that aided in the search for employment. This include 24/7 access to Wi-Fi services enabled ease of internet access as well as social resources which can provide connections to accessing information about job opportunities in the labour market.

> *That was a terrible, terrible decision I should have applied earlier. But I didn't realise what was going on outside or what was going to happen because I thought, I'm still a student and still safe. So once you go out, you realise that the labour market is hard. Now you feel very naked. I'm not as safe as I thought. So it was actually very easy looking for employment when you were a student. (…). I stayed at EOH residence, and it was very easy to just log into your computer and start looking for employment. You can do that on Saturday the whole day. Looking for a job after I graduated, I thought dammit I should have taken advantage of that time, I should actually have done that earlier because now it's very difficult to look for a job* (Interviewee 6).

> ***Interviewer:*** *Have you ever attempted to look for employment before you graduated?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *No.*
> ***Interviewer:*** *Why was that, did you consciously make a decision to do that?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *No, I thought things would be easy after graduation but unfortunately they turned the other way round.*
> ***Interviewer:*** *Going back, do you think that if you have started you job search before you graduated that would have been better?*
> ***Interviewee*** *Yes, honestly that would be better than now* (Interviewee 3).

For these reasons, delaying the search for employment by only starting to look and applying for employment opportunities upon graduation is also a contributing factor to the high graduate unemployment rates that are experienced by the country. This is arguably the reason why some graduates expressed sincere regrets for only searching and applying for employment post-graduation.

At the other end of the spectrum, some graduates that did look for employment whilst at university engaged in it only as a form of distraction. Although, they looked for employment, their primary objective was not to obtain employment. Seeking employment was more like a

secondary task to them and for this reason can be argued to be no different than the graduates that did not look for employment at all whilst at university.

> ***Interviewer:*** *Have you attempted to look for employment whilst you were still a student?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *Yes.*
> ***Interviewer:*** *And how was that experience different from when you looking for employment now that you out of the school system?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *It's totally different. It's two different worlds' actually cause now I'm not a student anymore and I'm just facing this one thing. I just have to get a job, at the time it was books and getting a job, it was just an extra thing to do. It wasn't as permanent as now, it's expected to happen* (Interviewee 8).

> *I would say when I was at school it was that distraction that I'm applying. Even if I don't get called back, its fine I have something distracting me. I was distracted. It's that thing, ok there's a vacancy, ok I will apply. Even if I don't get called backs, its fine I still need to finish the degree and its ok* (Interviewee 9).

4.2.1.3 Control

The control characteristic of the 'situation' explored participant's assessment of the degree of control they have over their current circumstances. The theme that emerged from participant's responses about the aspect of the situation that they can control or not in their attempt to cope with unemployment and looking for employment was that of emotional control.

> *The first one is I can't control when I will be hired. That is something that is total out of my control* (Interviewee 6).

4.2.1.3.1 Emotional control

Unemployment is a very severe problem in South Africa (De Witte et al., 2012). As such, and based on the participant's experiences with the labour market, most of the participants felt that they had no control over the situation to which they find themselves. Specifically, most of the participants indicated that when and who will offer them employment in the labour market is

totally out of their control. However, in coping with the situation, one has some control over their emotional reactions to the situation.

> *Ok. I think the sense of hope was something that I felt like I could always come back to. The sense of choice that things will work out, somewhere somehow, they will work out. (…). So on an emotional level, I was hopeful that despite all of this, all the efforts that I put in will one day be recognised* (Interviewee 1).

> *Yeah...just a bit hey. I am trying not be sad about being unemployed. I am trying not to bury my head in the sand* (Interviewee 4).

> *So I don't think you can necessarily control the actual emotions you experience, but you can control how you deal with them and how you can go forward beyond those moments* (Interviewee 5).

Moreover, there were some participants that felt that on the contrary, their emotions were beyond their means of control just like being hired.

> ***Interviewer:*** *Are you able to control your emotional responses to unemployment?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *No* (Interviewee 9).

> *You see with emotions it's not like you will feel depressed all the time. There are times where you just wake up and you just feel happy and then sometimes you just feel depressed. You can't control when you feel going depressed or when you going to feel happy. So I guess in that sense yeah, there are certain feelings I just couldn't control especially related to this thing of being unemployed* (Interviewee 6).

The situation that unemployed graduates are in is underlined by the experience of a lot of negative emotions as has been indicated by the participants in the study. It is difficult to imagine the experience of positive emotions when the graduates are frustrated about finding themselves unemployed after attaining a university qualification was supposed to secure employment for them in the labour market (Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Yu, 2013). Since being hired is beyond the control of the participants, unemployment is therefore an uncontrollable situation that calls for emotional-focused coping as outlined by Grossi (1999).

Two types of coping have been proposed by studies that explore coping with unemployment, include, problem-solving coping which involves job-seeking strategies (this will be elaborated when coping strategies are discussed) and emotional-focused coping (Grossi, 1999). The latter include the regulating of negative emotions through specific behaviours and cognitions such as avoiding thinking about the stressor such that unemployment is reframed in a less threatening perspective (Grossi, 1999). This is in line with the emotional control that the participants in this study ascribe to in order to cope with the negative emotions that comes with being an unemployed graduate.

4.2.1.4 Assessment

4.2.1.4.1 Negative appraisal of the situation

With different assessments of the situation from the participants, one thing that was apparent was that finding oneself relocated back home and without employment post-graduation is not a pleasant experience. Although the participant held different negative and neutral views of the situation, no one assessed the unemployment as a positive experience. Participants seemed to vary in their assessment of the unemployment situation. A dominant theme that emerged in relations to viewing the unemployment situation as positive, negative, or neutral was negative appraisal of their experiences grounded in emotional responses. All the emotions discussed by the participants were negative in nature and few had a positive emotional response.

> *No, no there's nothing positive about trying to find employment at that stage, no there's nothing* (Interviewee 6).

> *It's kind of negative situation because the more free time you have without engaging in anything the more distracted you become* (Interviewee 5).

> *(thinking) … (Silence) that a difficult question. It depends how you see it. It can be positive… actually it's not positive. How is it positive that I'm unemployed??? (Laughs)* (Interviewee 8).

Although, some participants did assess the transition to be positive (which will be discussed in later themes), the dominant emotional responses were negative and specifically that of

frustration. Their emotions fluctuate because of the experience of being unemployed. Therefore, feelings of being emotionally unstable are a theme of feelings of frustration.

> *(silence, followed by a gasp of air) … it's definitely frustrating. It's almost like a slap on the face, it's almost like an unwritten betrayal, you know, where you expected so much more out of life. As I said, doing the right things, (thinking)… you know. You feel as if going to an institution like Wits, and they say that Wits gives you the edge, you know… (chuckles)… The edge is not enough. So yeah, the experience of being unemployed, especially as a graduate is really incomprehensible. It's a feeling of, (thinking)… it's like being hit by a truck, you know. After all the effort that you put in, after all the sacrifices that you had to make, you know. The sleepless nights, the extra courses, the extra consultations, the extra readings, the marks that you tried to maintain. So it's a frustrating space to be in and you end up feeling so helpless as if – is there something that I haven't done, you know. What am I missing or what haven't I done right? You seem to have done all the right things but apparently there's something that is missing* (Interviewee 1).

> *Frustrating… (looking down and nodding the head). You just feel frustrated (sigh). Not doing anything and you also become demoralized. You feel like not applying anymore for job* (Interviewee 7).

> *Mostly the emotion you feel is frustration and there are moments of like giving up. It's really frustrating. I feel frustrated most of the time. I get frustrated, I get really frustrated.* (Interviewee 5).

> *Rough, being unemployed is really hectic because it's that thing to say I don't understand why I'm unemployed or why I get called for an interview and don't get called back or even if I do get a call back it's like there was someone better and I don't understand it. It fumbles me, but yeah it's that thing that is frustrating* (Interviewee 9).

> *(gasp of air) … The fullest experience is bad, the feelings, the emotional rollercoaster, I guess, is the biggest thing. I mean, in human, emotions are biggest thing. The fullest experience is emotional turmoil. Which is something deep because you can't deal with it. It's not physical, you can't say I have a cut and it will heal, it's deep seated, you go through it each and every single day of your life, you know* (Interviewee 4).

> *It's kind of embarrassing… well I got depressed, it's obviously very depressing. I only got depressed round about the eight-month cause of the realisation that 12 months is coming and I'm still not employed. So the experience, hmm… it is a horrible experience actually* (Interviewee 6).

Interviewer: And on an emotional level?
Interviewee: Emotional level it's sort of kills your self-esteem because you go for interviews sometime and then they don't call you back and then hmm… I don't know it blurs out a lot of things (Interviewee 9).

On the contrary to this theme, one participant who had expected to be unemployed upon graduation expressed that:

***Interviewer**: How long after graduating did you anticipate that you would be unemployed?*
***Interviewee**: Well, I knew that need to further my studies in order for me to be employed in this specific field.*
***Interviewer**: So you sort off anticipated that you would be unemployed.*
***Interviewee**: Yes, because I need to Master's Degree in order to practice*
***Interviewer**: So how would you describe the experience of being unemployed?*
***Interviewee**: It's hectic sometimes because you need money, but hey what can you do? Especially since I am aware that I was not going to get employed with my degree. It's just one of those* (Interviewee 10).

This participant did not have a negative emotional response to being unemployed. They almost immune to the negative experience of being an unemployed graduate. Part of this is because, as they have alluded to, they expected to be unemployed. This participant holds a Bachelor degree in Psychology and Anthropology which is offered by the Humanities faculty at the University of Johannesburg.

Humanities graduates struggle the most to secure employment in the external labour compared to other graduates with professional and technical degrees such as Engineering or Medicine (Oluwajodu et al. 2015; Van Schalkwkyk & Surujlal, 2012; Yu, 2013). Moreover, the Health Profession Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (n.d.) stipulates that anyone who wishes to practice as any type of Psychologist must obtain a minimum Master's degree in their respected psychological field.

This would suggest that the participant's response who graduating with only a Bachelor degree in Psychology is not unorthodox. Because of this regulation, university students that are pursuing a Psychology degree should be expected to be aware that the they are in better odds to secure employment and practice as Psychologists in the labour market if they pursue a Master's degree qualification. Therefore, in order to increase the odds of finding employment

opportunities in the external labour market, Humanities student may must resort to obtaining higher qualifications than a Bachelor degree. In support of this, Baldry (2013) notes in an interview with a research participant who also expressed feeling frustration with being unemployed upon graduation, that pursuing a Master's degree has become a tactic to increase graduate's employability.

4.3 Self

In any given transition, variables that characterize the individual are essential to understand the experience of the transition (Schlossberg, 1999). In this study, participant's psychological resources in dealing with unemployment and seeking employment behaviours where explored by interrogating individuals' self-perceptions. Furthermore, their personal and demographic characteristics, that is, gender, age, and race, as they relate to the experience of the transition were also explored in the current study.

4.3.1 Perceived Facilitators

To explore the perceived facilitators of participants in coping with the experience of unemployment and looking for employment in the labour market, participants were asked about the personal attributes that they believed facilitated the negotiation of the transition. Linked with this, and of particular interest to the current study, how these attributes assisted or hindered participants in looking for employment in the labour market was explored.

Interestingly, some participants in response to these questions struggled to think of any attributes they believed assists them with looking for employment in the labour market. These participants possibly expressed these ideas because they are still unemployed, that is, their personal characteristics have not resulted in employment yet and can therefore not be thought of as strengths.

> ***Interviewer:*** *What would you say your strengths are and how would you say they attribute to your search for employment and the flip side your weaknesses?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *(thinking)… but then it's going to be contradictory if I lay out my strengths and employment… it doesn't even seem like they working cause I'm still unemployed so me saying I have one, two, three strengths why then are they not working for me?*

Interviewer: *No I'm not asking about your strength and weaknesses like they do in an interview?*
Interviewee: *Yeah but still… (silence). That's still not working. Would I be in this situation if that was working? (….). This question is a bit difficult cause how do I relate to it? If I was here employed it would be a different, I would be saying this one, two, three worked for me in the search for employment but now I still have one, two, three but still not working so I'm the same as that person sitting there who doesn't one, two, three strengths (Interviewee 8).*

This may be seen as a lack of optimism on the part of the graduates. Mohanty (2010) studied the effects of positive attitude and optimism on employment and found that successfully securing employment in the labour market is also determined by the positive and optimistic attitude of the job-seeker. This means that it is essential for unemployed graduates to remain optimistic about employment regardless the circumstances they find themselves as a result of being unemployed. Understandably, however, the repeated exposure to negative feedback from the labour market would likely dampen many graduates' capacity for optimism. According to Mohanty (2010), optimism can be impacted by negative experiences that individuals go through.

4.3.1.1 Resilience

In contrast to the few who reported despondency, the ability to remain resilient in the face of adversity (that is unemployment and seeking employment) was a prominent attribute for participants in the study. Participants indicated that they will not lose hope that they will find employment in the labour market. This also included being composed.

I think my resilience plays a huge role. I am quiet resilient, I always tell myself that when those call come, they will come. So, don't be too impatient, just keep on doing what you doing, keep on applying and then you will eventually get the break (Interviewee 2).

I don't lose hope easily that's a strength in self (Interviewee 3).

I'm a very composed person (Interviewee 10).

In line with these findings, studies on unemployment have indicated that resilience is an important resource that individuals draw on to cope with the adversity of unemployment (Auer & Cazes, 2000; Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007). Resilience propels these unemployed graduates in the current study to not give up on seeking employment and fosters positive mood states in coping with the experience of unemployment. This is supported by findings from Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007), that resilience is correlated with positive outcomes, such as lower depression and higher job search assertiveness. This is because "positive outcomes are the result of resilient qualities (personal competence, attitudes) that moderate the adverse effects of unemployment" (Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007, p. 117).

4.3.1.2 Determination

Determination was also another prominent attribute that assisted participants in the study to cope with unemployment. It is especially critical for seeking employment in the labour market.

> *I am a very determined person, very passionate. I am a very determined person, very passionate. (…). So I am a very creative person and like I said I am a very resourceful person. I am never afraid to ask for help, I am a hard worker, yes (chuckles). I try to do what I am supposed to do as best as I can, (thinking)… excellence! Striving for excellence because that's something which people will never forget you by. You need to be excellence in your work* (Interviewee 1).

> *so in terms of strengths and looking for employment, I am a very ambitious person and I'm tenacious person so that is a strength. But at the same time it hard being rejected* (Interviewee 5).

Determination is also linked to qualities of being resilient (Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007; Wagnild & Young, 1993). Therefore, an argument can be made that resilient graduates are more likely to be determined to find employment regardless of the circumstances and adversity that they may face. These graduates will not lose hope in the prospects of finding employment in the labour market.

Other strengths that were indicated by the participants included being affective in communication and time management (Interviewee 7), personable (Interviewee 9), and resourceful (Interviewee 1).

4.3.2 Perceived hindrances

A common theme that emerged from the data in relations to participant's perceived hindrances and how such attributes hampered their attempts to find employment in the labour market was being impatient and expecting to being employed on their own terms.

4.3.2.1 Impatience

> *I am a very impatient person, ironically. (…). I am a very impatient person; I expect things to happen at my pace. (…). It's a weakness in a sense that, (thinking)… I get very frustrated when things don't happen in my time. I am a very impatient person and sometimes it blocks me from enjoying life. (thinking) I think a lot, I worry a lot, it consumes me. So it's mental energy and it's a weakness in that sense.* (Interviewee 1).

> *With a lot of impatience comes a lot of frustration because at times you would even apply for jobs that do not match your qualification just to get a job and be employment* (Interviewee 2).

As alluded to above, graduates do not have control over when they will be employed or who will hire them. If they expect that the labour market will abide by their timelines, graduates experience more negative emotions which may also result in them giving up the search for employment Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007).

Moorhouse and Caltabiano (2007) note that long-term unemployment and failure to secure employment in the labour market can lessen job search behaviours. Important psychological resources that foster resilient qualities which are essential for effective coping with unemployment and looking for employment include perseverance, resourcefulness, self-reliance, and determination (Auer & Cazes, 2000; Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007). These psychological resources require an unemployed graduate be patient (Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007).

Other hindering personal attributed that were alluded to by the participants included poor time management (Interviewee 10), overreacting (Interviewee 1), and being too emotional (Interview 5).

4.3.3 Race

In the South African context, race has been shown to have an impact on the length of unemployment that people will experience, including graduates (Ama, 2008; Anyanwu, 2000; Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007). As such, participants were asked about the perceived effect that their race has had on their search for employment in the labour market. The dominant theme that emerge from the data pertained to white privilege and two subthemes of black stereotypes and language exclusion.

4.3.3.1 White privilege

Twenty-three years of democracy in South Africa, labour practices in the external labour market are still experienced to be discriminatory towards black people. All the participants in the study were African and indicated that they attributed their lack of securing employment in the labour market post-graduation to the belief that white graduates are privileged over them in the labour market practice of recruitment. Whilst related to personal characteristics of the participants (and therefore discussed within section), this particular theme represents

participant's experiences of the interaction between their situation and self.

> *With regards to race, it's a given, it's not even debatable, the system was created that way.* (Interviewee 4).

> *Race! I feel like it's a big thing. Let's say you go to an interview and if the interviewer is white, already there's pressure because they going to want to test this black kid on what do you think you have? I could have called Mark but then Velarie or Dipuo came I can't even pronounce your name how am I going to be able to relate, you know. Even if we are in an interview and you see there's white folks already you feel like you at a disadvantage regardless of the content they might have and you have. You get insecure because they have an upper hand we can't pretend that we don't know or don't see. If there's a white person, they consider them before us* (Interviewee 9).

> *Then in terms of race, (thinking)… you know we… South Africa is still… we come from a very racialized history that race is something that you cannot ignore. It's not completely true to say that all white people will find jobs, but as white person you are already given certain privileges than a black child. So race comes to play already from the day that you are born were I had to work twice as hard to get into Wits, you know. But you find somebody who is white, who come from a private school, you know. That's already a preparation for a life-time. Then you translate that into us now looking for a job. So probably because of all the privileges, and by privilege I mean things like (thinking)… the means of production in this country are still in the majority of white hands. So I am saying that now we stand together, we both attain the same qualifications, so since the means of production are already in your reach, you already have uncle Ben, uncle Suzie, uncle Steven, (pauses). You are already stand in a better position than myself who comes from the townships. So already (pauses)… I do not have the same social capital and social support in terms of our race* (Interviewee 1).

Graduate unemployment statistics in South Africa lead support to these experiences and partly the explain the context in which these experiences and meta-stereotypes are formed (Burger & Jafta, 2010; Kraak, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015). In social psychology, meta-stereotype has been defined as a "a person's beliefs regarding the stereotype that out-group members hold about his or her own group" (Vorauer, Main & O'Connel, 1998, p. 917). That graduates hold such meta-stereotypes, must be explored in the context of their racialized experiences within the labour market.

"Graduate employment by race continues to reflect apartheid-era patterns of discrimination" (Kraak, 2015, p. 100). Race remains a critical determinant of labour market outcomes and there is minimal evidence to suggest that the effects of race in the labour market practice are diminishing (Burger & Jafta, 2010). In relations to unemployment trend in South Africa, African people across all working population categories are the highest number of unemployed people in comparison to other racial groups even post 1994 (Leibbrandt, Woolard, McEwen, & Koep, 2010).

Chutel (2017) indicates that African people, the majority population in the country still have the highest unemployment rate at 31.4 percent, followed by Coloured people at 22.9 percent. White people still have the lowest unemployment rate at 6.6 percent (Chutel, 2017). By extension, African graduates are the graduate population with the highest levels of unemployment in the labour market. In 2015, African graduate unemployment rate was reported to be 19 percent, followed by Coloured graduates at 7 percent, and Indian graduates

had the lowest unemployment rate at 3 percent in the previously disadvantaged groups (that is, Africans, Indians, and Coloured) (Kraak, 2015).

This means that the labour market does not absorb nearly as many African graduates as it does other previously disadvantaged graduates. Notably from political debates in the country about the state of the economy and labour market, African people may have high political power, but not economic power. White people on the other hand, owing to the apartheid regime which privileged them, maintaining ownership of the vast majority of private corporations such that they have a power and authority over the economy thereby minimizing African economic participation (Jones & Muller, 2016).

Economic power across racial populations is still unequal in favor of white people and this affords them certain privileges in labour market practices. Participants in this study experienced this as a central limitation to their opportunities for employment. Although the government has implemented countless legislation aimed at governing labour market practice such that there is equal representation of all racial groups in the labour market, these initiatives have not achieved the desired outcomes in the modern labour market environment (Employment Equity Act, 1998). Legislation like the Affirmative Action legislation of 1998 was intended to improve labour market practices such that unfair discrimination is eliminated in employment practices and people from previously disadvantaged groups are attracted, developed and retained in the labour market (Employment Equity Act, 1998).

However, only organisations that have a workforce of 50 and more permanent employees are statutorily required to abide with this legislation (Employment Equity Act, 1998; Horwitz & Jain, 2011). This coupled with resistance to reform measures means that Africans remain the primary target of exclusionary labour practices. The labour practice of offering employment to graduates, as experienced by the participants in the study, can therefore be argued to be based on pervasive power dynamics between the ‘haves’ (the elite minority with economic power) and ‘have not’ (the majority African graduates who are depended on the ‘haves’ for employment in the labour market) (Townley, 2005).

4.3.3.1.1 Black stereotypes

Other participants indicated that they believed that the reason for the state of the labour market practice that favor white graduates over black graduates is because blacks are stereotyped in the labour market.

> *I find it very hard to believe when somebody says 'I don't see colour'. Because race plays in so many ways in this country. Everything, you know… (chuckles) I'm not saying everything we can attribute it to race. But a lot of issues are brought about because of your skin colour. Ok so being black in this country and looking for employment. There are already certain connotations you know* (Interviewee 1).

> *Cause apparently they have perceptions about us. There is a perception in the Legal industry that blacks, by extension black graduates are very lazy. They don't know anything. So white guys don't look at us that way cause is very easy for you to get employed if you are a white graduate. I'm not saying they don't struggle with finding employment, I'm saying comparatively it's much easier for them to get employed than us* (Interviewee 6).

> *So in terms of race, I still feel like people think that black people are not good enough even if you studied. There's still that judgement on us that you can't be better than Van Wyk out there.* (Interviewee 8).

In line with these findings, Biko (2017) publish a newspaper article on the Mail and Guardian online newspaper which outlined racial stereotypes that threaten the South Africa labour market. He proposes that African people, and by extension graduates, are confronted with racial stereotypes on day-to-day basis as they attempt to look for employment in the labour market. Labelling African people as lazy and incompetent and white people as knowing and powerful are stereotypes that originate from apartheid government's efforts to legitimize discriminatory laws (Biko, 2017; Seekings, 2008).

Black stereotypes, whether descriptive stereotypes (describing what African graduates are like) or prescriptive stereotypes (describing what African graduates should be like) have threatening implications for the employment of these graduate in the labour market post-graduation. This is because they give rise to biased judgments and decisions in relations to the employment of African graduates in the labour market (Heilman, 2012). Pertaining to the findings in the

current study, African graduates perceived that they will struggle to obtain employment even though they are technically qualified because of these black stereotypes.

The fact that African graduates have obtained university qualification despite their disadvantaged backgrounds as illustrated by Interviewee 1, alone provides cause to challenge such assumptions.

> *I had to work twice as hard to get into Honours because, well, actually you work twice as hard to get into Wits, you know. Because you are studying in front of a candle, you know. You have all these issues at home, you have financial troubles but, and I am not saying that this like completely prevalent in South Africa. But you find somebody who is white, who come from a private school, you know. That's already a preparation for a life-time. It's very different when you see somebody from a private school and somebody from a rural or township school. So already there is those differences there* (Interviewee 1).

The African graduates interviewed were determined and willing to put in effort despite the hardships with which they are faced with. They spoke of ensuring that they are relevant and possess the necessary technical skills to compete for employment in the labour market just like other graduates from non-African racial groups. Black stereotypes not only perpetuate bias judgements, but also disadvantage deserving African graduates from employment opportunities for assumptions that are made about them which they did not have direct influence over. This means that African graduate's interviewed perceive their employment prospects as not dependent on their true abilities but dependent on factors other than their university qualifications and individual capability.

4.3.3.1.2 Language exclusion

Some participants indicated that white privilege in the labour market practice of recruitment is achieved through other subtle means which involve the use of language exclusion. African graduates, they argued, are discriminated against because they are not fluent in Afrikaans ensuring white privilege in the recruitment process prevails.

You will see some of them are quiet patently exclusionary cause they would say you need to speak both English and Afrikaans. So if you look at it that way, they not really searching for us. You see and you look at it and be like no but I don't qualify. This actually takes me back to

that point of being black. Obviously they can't say, no we don't want black people. But they know that a lot of black people can't speak Afrikaans. So it's exclusionary in that sense (Interviewee 6).

Yes, you know in job post they will tell you that they need someone who is bilingual, very fluent in English and Afrikaans. You can see already it closes opportunity for black people (Interviewee 10).

English is the medium of instruction at most higher learning institutions and the primary mode of communication in the labour market (Baldry, 2013). As such, all graduates are expected to be able to read, write, speak, and understand English to participant in the labour market. On this basis, participants had expected equal employment opportunities irrespective of home language, if a sufficient proficiency in English could be demonstrated.

This expectation was not met and the participants suggested that they felt that they were disadvantaged and discriminated against because of their inability to communicate in Afrikaans. Graduate's home languages have been demonstrated by Baldry (2013) to hold advantageous implications for their employment opportunities. Specifically, the absorption rate for white graduates (with English and Afrikaans as their primary home languages) is much higher than other graduates from other racial groups (Baldry, 2013). With language being closely tied to group identity and inter-group dynamics, some participants experienced any requirements of Afrikaans as an extension of white dominance (Verwey & Quayle, 2012). For these participants, Afrikaans is symbolically associated with the apartheid regime and advancement of Afrikaner nationalism. This philosophy with its views on the racial superiority of Afrikaans and with exclusionary practices "created a self-referential Afrikaner ideological world" (Verwey & Quayle, 2012, p. 553).

Verwey and Quayles (2012) quote the author Annelie Botes to demonstrate the lingering effects of this philosophy:

> *"I don't like black people. In my formative years in Uniondale there were no black people. If one was walking around it was a trespassing crook. And then you must run, because he's going to catch you. I know they're just people like me. I know they have the same rights as me. But I don't understand them. And then…I don't like them. I avoid them because I'm scared of them. (…). In the course of the interview she characterized blacks as angry, violent, uneducated, unskilled, incompetent, baboon-like, and criminal* (p. 551-552).

The requirement of Afrikaans, for some participants, was read within this context and seen to be as intentionally exclusionary. That participants hold such views must be understood within the context of their racialized experiences of a labour market that still appears to offer unequal opportunities. Any stipulation of Afrikaans as a job requirement (justified or not) was interpreted with reference to racialized identities and seen as mechanism of white privilege.

4.3.4 Gender

Owing to the cultural socialisation of men and women, gender is a variable that holds practical implications for the experience of transitions (Schlossberg, 1999). Participants were, therefore, asked about the effects of gender in their attempts to find employment in the labour market. Two dominate themes emerged from the data were male privilege and women empowerment.

4.3.4.1 Male privilege

Interestingly, both males and females that participated in the study indicated that they still believe that male graduates are advantaged in the labour market because of gender stereotypes that are still being perpetuated in discourse.

> *Being male! but I feel like being male also give you an unearned privilege in a way. Being a man offers you so many privileges in society, in the work environment, at home. (…). In terms of looking for employment, so you would find that sometimes… yes, yes, yes. So there is two different ways of looking at this. There first one is that when an employer looks at me as a man. They think of me as somebody who has to provide at home so there's is already that unearned privilege that I have, you know. They look at me that oh! You will never take time off because you are pregnant. You have to take care of those kids. A man has that privilege already in himself* (Interviewee 1).

> *I don't know why, but it's almost as if black females are not really the best demographic in terms of employment. It's almost like people think we are incompetent or we have to be mollycoddle.* (…). *I think being a black female is one of the hardest thing to do in life and obviously that also translate to finding employment it is hard being a black female* (Interviewee 5).

> *Yes, I think guys are more prone to finding employment. They are advantaged because there's also not a lot of guys who go to school* (Interviewee 9).

Males are often privileged and advantaged in the labour market because of underlying gender stereotypes that people have been socialized to believe. Participants generally believed that males generally find employment faster than females. This has nothing to do with their technical skills that they possess, but everything to do with preferred masculine which are thought to be assertiveness, dominance, analytical, logical-based problem solving, and objectivity (Heilman, 2012). These are attributes that are commonly favoured within the business environment as opposed to attributes such as considerate, friendly, obedient, and understanding that females are socially constructed to represent (Heilman, 2012).

Even with a university qualification, female graduates still do not have the same odds as males graduates to secure employment in the labour market (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). Furthermore, in the South African context, numerous scholars such as Archer and Chetty (2013), Baldry (2013), Pop and Markhuizen (2010) have indicated that female graduates are discriminated against in the labour market.

Male graduates were also indicated to be advantaged in the labour market because of the industry or field of study that they pursue.

> *So in my Honours class, they were three black males. So in psychology, psychology itself is a female dominated career. So I feel like I am in a minority and perhaps better positioned. I… (chuckles) yeah there is a growing need for black male psychologists* (Interviewee 1).

> *… If you are female it's even worse. It's two times worse because it's still a male dominated industry regard less of race. So even if you going to get the post, the relevant post to whatever you studied. It's usually the black guys than females who get those posts* (Interviewee 8).

> *So for my course there's literally limited males. If I were to get an interview and there were two of us, there's more chance that he's getting the job than me because already they have female attributes within the company or in the agency* (Interviewee 9).

Female participants experienced their gender as an inhibiting factor for employment obtainment and primarily explained this with reference to perceived gender stereotypes. There was however, for some, an alternative description of the role that gender plays in employment prospects.

4.3.4.2 Women empowerment

A few participants indicated that with the strong drive from the government to advance women in the business environment, female graduates enjoy privileges in the labour market.

> *... however there is a very big cultural shift in the work environment. There is so much empowerment of women and thus subjugation of men, you know. You never hear of 'take a boy child to work'. It's always 'take a girl child to work'. You go to most departments, and this happens especially in the government sector were equity is such a big thing. Empowering previously disadvantaged, certain groups, especially as a black female or a black disabled female. That's even currency on itself (chuckles), you know. There's a wave of one gender which is now privileged and empowered at the subjugation of the other and that plays so many interesting dynamics even in the working environment* (Interviewee 1).

> *No I know most of the posts nowadays are actually focus on giving woman an upper hand. (...). Sometime it is a bit frustrating to actually see a job that you might qualify for and then after reading everything, you actually find out or learn that this job is specifically for women, that was not nice.* (Interviewee 2).

> *I think my gender disadvantages me. I think most of the companies nowadays consider ladies more than guys. They say women are more effective than guys. Yes, they consider you ladies* (Interviewee 7).

With women making up the majority of the population of South Africa, but still making up only about a third of the workforce, it is not surprising that women empowerment is at the forefront of equal representation policies and legislation (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Mathur-Helm, 2005). Such initiatives aim at providing employment opportunities particularly for young women and transforming the economy to embrace the active participation of women (Levendale, 2017). A few participants appeared to argue that, as a result of such initiatives, being female was advantageous for employment. These initiatives, for these participants, were seen has inherent discriminatory towards men, despite the recognition that they were instituted to undo previous discrimination. For such participants, any action that appears to promote an outgroup is interpreted as an act against the in-group and therefor discriminatory, even if it recognised that that action was at some time necessary.

4.3.5 Age

Participants also responded to questions about the effects of age in their attempt to find employment in the labour market.

4.3.5.1 Age does not matter

Most participants communicated that age did not seem to have any effect on the participant's attempts to find employment in the labour market.

> *(thinking)… I haven't necessarily, personally encountered effects of age. I think maybe it depends on the type of industry or field that you are in. So the private sector, I feel like the private sector does look at those things and they do see you as a disadvantage because of your age. (…). But then also I feel like for me age is not necessarily a factor because I am a Masters graduate. So then the kind of jobs that I apply for don't necessarily use age as a determinant criterion, you know. So when you apply for an Industrial Intern, already they look at things like your qualification and what else you have been doing, you know.* (Interviewee 1).

> *No I am not impacted by age* (Interviewee 2).

These findings are contrary to empirical research which has shown that age is a critical determinant of employment practices in the labour market. For instances, Mlatsheni and Rospabe (2002) demonstrated that younger males especially are favored in the labour market Only a few participants acknowledged this as a possibility.

> *Yes, I think so because of age constrains. If he's 20 years old, I'm 36 years old definitely you will take the 20-year-old. Because the company is growing and they want someone who will be there for longer periods* (Interviewee 3).

4.3.5.2 Age related social pressure

Another prevalent theme related to age was the perceived social pressure to become successful at a young age. Societal expectations of graduates also determine the expected level of success that graduates should attain upon graduation. Community members that have invested in the

upbringing of a graduate expect and anticipate that the graduates will be successful almost immediately upon graduation because of the efforts and sacrifices that everyone involved have made. These positive and good intentions by the community are however not received by the graduates in the same spirit as intended by community members. It adds tremendous frustration and negative emotions of disappointment and letting other people down to the experiences of unemployed graduates.

> *A 25-year-old is driving a Lamborghini. In terms of age (thinking)… there is that frustration, there's that challenge. There's pressure, yes. We live in a world which wants people to be successful. Its 2017, how can you not have a car? You know. You get that constantly where ever you go* (Interviewee 1).

> *I think the society is the one that is putting too much pressure on us by detecting that you should have achieved all these things by a certain age* (Interviewee 4).

The self and transition

Many of the themes that emerged with regards to aspects of the self did not strictly pertain to self-evaluations made by the participants. Instead, participants often reflected upon the interaction between aspects of identity (race and gender) and a social context that (dis)favours such categories. Whilst the participants reflected upon personality and behavioural dimensions to some degree when discussing aspects of the self and its relationship to managing transitions, the vast majority of the discussion turned to the interaction between individual characteristics and an environment that promotes or discriminates against such characteristics.

4.4 Support

Participants responded to questions about sources of 'support' that they have that enable them to manage and cope with their unemployment situation post-graduation. In this regards, the following themes emerged around the 'support' that is available to the participants.

4.4.2 Support structures

Participants communicated that they drew from multiple resources for 'support' in coping with unemployment. These included the support from either family, other people, institutions, and even networking in order to look for employment in the labour market.

4.4.2.1 Family support

The most prevalent source of social support that the participants in the study relied on was the support of their families. It was expected that participants will depend on their families for support because they have all relocated back home and are in the presence of their families every single day of the transition from graduation to unemployment. Further, almost all the participants indicated that their intimate family rather than extended and distant families provided them with support during this very stressful unemployment situation.

> *At home they always support me and with looking for a job. They are quiet patient with me, they know that I will eventually find the job. Maybe sometimes, my mom would tell me that there are post here and there and I would look for them and stuff like that or ask me how the job hunting is going, and my dad as well yeah… and a couple of relatives and cousins* (Interviewee 2)

> *So obviously the support from your family is unconditional, so it's quite high, you know. Your mom and dad what the best for you. They will always be there for you, you know. (thinking)… so in that case I can say that they always want the best for you, they will always tell you that you what you are good enough, you will make it. Just be patient, you know. So there's a high level of support there, it's unconditional* (Interviewee 1).

> *As much as I do have a support structure, my family is in my life, I have a place to stay at the end of the day and my overheads are pretty low. (…). Because I have a support structure, I don't have to worry about rent, I don't have to worry about certain things* (Interviewee 5).

> *Well my family always tells me that everything happens for a reason and sometimes things take time. So I believe it's not my time yet* (Interviewee 10).

The immediate family is a critical social support structure because it provides graduates with intimate relationships with loved ones that are based on support, trust, and understanding (Schlossberg, 1999). These qualities of the family of the unemployed graduates ease the transition from graduation to unemployment, unlike unemployed graduates undergoing the transition without the support of their family units. According to Anderson et al. (2012), the latter is therefore more prone to seeking professional assistant in replacement of their parental support in the attempt to cope with the transition. However, this form of support is not at the

disposal of most unemployed graduates as they do not the financial resources to seek out professional help unless they have financial support from their families.

In this study, participants indicated receiving instrumental and palliative support from their families. Instrumental support which included financial support which provided graduates with resources they require to seek employment, whilst palliative support included minimizing graduates emotional distress (Anderson et al., 2012) According to Schlossberg (1999), these families are providing social support which involves giving of material things such as money but also immaterial things like information and time. This is because, participants in the study have indicated that the amount of support that they received from their immediate families is very high and unconditional. It frees graduates from worrying about anything else which might cause additional stress. With this, the participants in the study can therefore devote their time, energy and effort to seeking employment.

4.4.2.1.1 Self-reliance

Some participants in responses to their family support indicated that their families did not want to burden their families. These graduates preferred to rely on themselves.

> *You didn't want to put unnecessary strain on them by asking for money and all those kind of things. They would help where necessary* (Interviewee 6).

> *I don't want to put pressure on them (talking about his family). Yeah, that's the thing. I don't want to put pressure on them because they don't know what is happening so I don't want to stress them. I take it all by myself, sometimes I feel for them they've done their part, honestly* (Interviewee 3).

These graduates do not want to put additional stress on their families by heavily relying on them for support in finding employment in the labour market. Their families did provide emotional support to them by encouraging them to not give up the search for employment. This is enough for these graduates as they feel relying on their families for instrumental support in looking for employment is beyond the means of their family.

4.4.2.2 Peer support

Another prominent theme was that of relying on people outside of the immediate family. These would be the people such as the graduate's friends and peer in their social networks. They indicate that sometimes it is easy for them to open up to their friends than their families because their peers can relate to their situation.

> *We go back home; everybody goes back to where they come from. We just call each other like hey have you found anything? and they like no we have not found anything. And that's how we talk to each other about this experience of being unemployed. (thinking)… hey I don't know it changes a lot of things, it changes how you perceive things as well* (Interviewee 6).

> *So how I coped with my pressure of unemployment was (thinking)… I had support, you know. I had friends. (…). And then my friends. I have a few friends and those friends understand who I am and I try to also appreciate them. (…). But then they are those friends who want to talk about your experiences, that the other part that you need so much to kind of vent those emotions because you are carrying so many negative emotions. (…). So there are friends who will say, you know what I'm listening to you, I hear you, I feel you, you know. But friend this is not the end, take it easy, you know. (thinking)… I know what you are capable of, you can do it, just be patient man, you can do it* (Interviewee 1).

> *This is why in the township there is a lot of 'cliques' or 'gangs' because they don't get it in the home* (Interviewee 4).

> *I would say it's my friends. Like my friends are so positive that it's going to happen. Like don't lose hope* (Interviewee 9).

Whilst most participants did not have labour market networks to draw upon, a few tried to rely on friends to secure employment in the labour market.

> *My friends support me… (silence). Some of them are working at the moment, so I would give them my CV so they can submit it for where there is job posts* (Interviewee 7).

> *I have friend that graduated before me and if there's a job post somewhere they will let me know that there's a job post apply. It's basically my friends people that I went to varsity with* (Interviewee 8).

Networks of friends, as referred to by Schlossberg (1999), are critical social support systems. Participants indicated that above emotional and financial support, their peers also offer advice and information about the availability of employment which is something that their families are not able to do. In this sense, peers function more as social capital which can offer potential connections employment opportunities in the labour market (Ama, 2008; Kraak, 2015; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015)

4.4.2.2.1 Comfort in other unemployed graduates

The specific type of support that participants in the study indicate that helped them vastly in coping and dealing with unemployment post-graduation was the knowledge that their peers are also in the same situation with them. Knowing that other graduates that are their peers are also struggling to secure employment in the labour market gave the participants comfort in that they are not the only ones in this stressful transition.

> *Here's one other thing, because I am staying with my cousin, right. We were both doing the same course and there were other friends of ours that we know of and it so happens that all of us have the same problem of finding employment. So it's kind of comforting that the person next to you is in the same situation. (...). Well my friend and my cousin are all in the same situation so that helped to ease everything* (Interviewee 6).

> *I would say I'm more free with my friend than my family cause then they can relate that I'm not getting a job. So I relate more to my friends more when it comes to a lot of things. Even with work, it's that thing to say let's apply we apply we all don't get call backs, you get a call back it's like a good luck thing but then you still come back you like (thinking)... I didn't get it. And then it's that thing that I understand that we are at a struggle of wanting to get a job* (Interviewee 9).

> *I see almost everyone we to school with at the same time are not working nicely. So it kind of brings me down and say (thinking)… these things happen otherwise it's nothing major* (Interviewee 10).

The support that graduates receive from their immediate family and friends reinforce graduate's sense of worth and protection (Schlossberg, 1999). This could be the reason for some graduates becoming more open with their friends than their families because their peers can relate to the situation of being unemployed post-graduation. When two people are

undergoing the same transition at the same time, they can relate to one another because they understand the experiences and frustrations of the transition first hand (Anderson et al., 2012). This is an arguably a coping mechanism among unemployed graduates used to deal with the transition as well as to navigate out of it. This is the affirmation function of social support. It is the express acknowledgement that we are in this together (Schlossberg, 1995).

Finding support from other unemployed graduates also holds the benefit of receiving honest feedback from one peers. As all the graduates are unemployed and seeking employment, they can be honest with each other and share job-seeking strategies and behaviors and provide comfort and encouragement to one another. Interviewee 9 who indicated that without her friends, she would have given in to the corruption in the labour market to try secure employment.

> ***Interviewer:*** *You are in this together, do you think if you didn't have those friends it would be worse?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *Yeah, I probably would have made very bad decisions in the aspect that these contacts to say 'they know someone and someone so and so… I just want to be your friend'. I feel like I'd be more immune to accepting that that is how things are done. But because now I have that support system of my friends that say you could still find a job. We are not saying there's time, there's no time, but you can't just be conforming to situations like that. So yeah, I wouldn't be the same if I didn't have my friends and we did go through what we going through now. It would not be the same.*

4.4.2.3 Institutional support

A few participants indicated that institutional support was fundamental to them. Institutional support, in this regard incorporated the graduate's university social resources within their faculties and departments. Institutional support refers to "political groups, work settings, social welfares, or community support groups, as well as various other more-or-less formal outside agencies that are places to which an individual can turn for help" (Schlossberg, 1999, p. 101).

> *You see the other networking platforms that one might have used was the structures at Wits for instance the BLF. For instance, I was the member of the BLF, (what do they call it)? BLA not BLF* (Interviewee 6).

> *I had networks, I had lecturers so for somebody else that might not be something which he or she has access to. (…). Trying to keep in contact with most of my lectures. I think that's something you should never lose. Never lose the relationship that you have with your lectures. Especially those lectures who you know that wanted the best for you. (…). I really kept in touch with my lectures like I said. (thinking)… I would ask them*

> *what's available in the department, what I can do, you know. (thinking)… this are my skills; I would sell my skills to them* (Interviewee 1).

> *I have a group that I'm part of for every now and then it's like an NGO that does, it provides students with applying and stuff* (Interviewee 9).

> *But I have tried Harambee and I have tried Tribe. Tribe has been helping me part time jobs like office work, like admin, but they just call you for like 3times a week or a month it depends on how busy they are. And they have other promotional agencies they helping a bit* (Interviewee 10).

Participants indicated that they relied on university institutions, employment agencies such as Harambee and other community support groups such as Non-profit organisations for support in seeking for employment in the labour market. External support agencies such as these ones are recognised to be instrumental in the successful navigation of stressful transitions such as unemployment for graduates' post-graduation (Anderson et al., 2012).

They act as social support by providing information about employment opportunities in the labour market and essential skills for securing employment. Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator is especially recognised in Johannesburg for upskilling graduates to enhance their relevance in the labour market by sharpening their research, communication, and computer literacy skills (Fallows & Weller, 2006; Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Salas-Velasco, 2007). In regards of unemployed graduates, Harambee and other agencies of the like are useful outlets for navigating the transition from graduation to employment. University social networks are also pivotal for this reason as indicated by the participants.

4.4.2.3.1 No institutional support

Some participants do not make use of their universities as a support resource. They indicate that up until now, they have not thought of getting in touch with their universities, faculties, or departments for social support.

> *Black Lawyers Associations Students Chapter. You join BLA student chapter at Wits and then you meet with a lot of people. The only people that you meet are your fellow law students and then the idea is that once you go out to the workplace you join the umbrella of the BLA and the we network there as lawyers. But it's very difficult to network when you are on a BLA student chapter and you not a student. You see, you*

are right there in the middle you can't join this BLA because you know not a student anymore. So it's very difficult to then meet different people to say can you help there, take my cv (Interviewee 6).

No (thinking)… in most cases some lecturers would tell you that they do not know a lot of people and they are clueless, so you would ultimately have to fend for yourself (Interviewee 2).

Interviewer: *Have you tried going back to the institutions that you graduated in where you have relationships with the lectures or the department…*
Interviewee: *I haven't tried that* (Interviewee 8).

This could be because these graduates perceive low support from their university as they have graduated several years ago. Arguably, these perceptions are a result of the high number of students that are registered with higher learning institutions. The Higher Education and Training (2015) noted that on any given year, about 120 000 students enrolled within higher educational institutions. Of these students, 89 percent enrolled at one of the 23 public universities with which participants in this study had enrolled. Participants, therefore, may consider that with so many students in university, chances of the institution providing relevant support for seeking employment in the labour market to all these students after they graduate is very low.

4.4.2.4 Networking

Participants responded to probing questions about engaging in social networking for purposes of looking for employment in the labour market.

Yeah networking is very important honestly. I tried LinkedIn. I get many people from LinkedIn. (…). I rely on internet a lot, yes. (thinking)… it's Kelly and Quest but they do not answer I don't know what's the problem… (pause)… but in fact I rely on the internet. (Interviewee 3).

I network a lot with volleyball people… (thinking). Basically, it's just volleyball people (Interviewee 7).

Interviewer: *With the referrals would you say that they form part of your networking structure?*

> ***Interviewee:*** *Hmm yeah they do because, because I always communicate with other people that are close to me. We always talk about it that, (silence) are you employed or are you getting something? As soon as you hear about something you try let everyone know. Like ok let me talk to this guys and we should all apply. It's that thing.*
> ***Interviewer:*** *So you guys have a group like a WhatsApp group of some sort where you all discuss?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *Yes, of all graduate in different spheres. It doesn't mean only graduate from BCom, there's Psychology, Communication, Accounting like there's a lot of us. Like there was one that closed yesterday form the National Treasurer so we all applied cause it like required a lot of people from different qualifications. So we also spoke about that one, and then there's the one at Ekurhuleni, so we talk about it we do share such information* (Interviewee 8).

Although participants acknowledge that they do not have social capital that can afford them employment opportunities in the labour market, they also acknowledge that social networking is crucial in their efforts to secure employment. This is because we live in a world were securing employment in the labour market is not only depended on the type of qualification a graduate possess, highly dependent on who the graduate knows that can enable them to navigate their way through the labour market (Adeyemo & Ajufo, 2005; Ama, 2008; Kraak, 2015).

In the absence of knowing relevant and influential people in the labour market that can help the graduates find employment, they resort to relying on each other to build these social networks. Through the use of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, participants indicated sharing employment opportunities for their peers to apply if the meet the requirements of that particular vacancy. This is a convoy of social support which emphasize the giving and receiving of social support by individuals undergoing a transition (Schlossberg, 1999). It is grounded on the underlying principle that in any form of transition that an individual will undergo in their life cycle, they are surrounded by other individuals that relate to them by either giving or receiving social support (Schlossberg, 1999).

In line with these findings, Kraak (2015) investigated the role of social networks among graduates for securing employment in the labour market and found that 14.5 percent of the graduates obtained employment through their friends. Furthermore, graduates from Vaal University of Technology obtained employment from their social networks more than graduates from Cape Peninsula University of Technology because of being based in a large urban metropolis (Kraak, 2015). Consequently, this means that the employment of social networks by the participants in this study can yield positive outcomes in terms of securing employment in the labour market because all the participants are based in Johannesburg and

Pretoria which are seen as the economic hub of South Africa (City of Johannesburg, 2014; Juech, 2014).

4.4.2.4.1 No networking

Other participants in response to questions about networking indicated that they are not actively involved in networking for purposes of looking for employment.

> ***Interviewer:*** *What about institution's or networking as some form of social support?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *No… I am not a big social media person* (Interviewee 4).

> *Being on social media and being unemployed, that's another thing. So it almost makes you feel like you are stagnant. Hmm… I would say there's a certain, there's a bit of shame that comes with like being unemployed. So I haven't really utilised my networking or my networks to its full potential* (Interviewee 5).

This was mainly because networking for them meant social networking via platforms like Facebook which they tried to avoid during this transition. To these graduates, social media added additional pressure on them just like societal expectation and age related pressure to be successful. For these reason, they avoided networking via social media platforms. These findings are contrary to the findings obtained in Gonzales and Hancock (2011); and Shaw and Gant (2002) studies about the effects of internet use and social media.

Shaw and Gant (2002) investigated the effects of internet use on users' psychological health. They found that the use of the internet was beneficial for the psychological health of the participants in their study as it decreased feeling of loneliness and depression, while increasing perceived social support and self-esteem (Shaw & Gant, 2002). Gonzales and Hancock (2011) in their study of the effect of Facebook exposure on self-esteem found that Facebook exposure deepened relationship formation with peers which subsequently had positive influence on the participant's self-esteem.

However, these findings should be read with caution as both studies were not conducted in South Africa and did not have unemployed graduates as participants. In the former study, participants were undergraduate psychology students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and in the latter study participants were students from a Northeastern university who participated in this study for extra credit (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Shaw & Gant, 2002)

4.5 Strategies

To explore the ways participants, cope with the transition from graduation to employment whilst they remain unemployment, questions about their direct actions or behaviour that they engage in to secure employment were asked. Firstly, they reported their individual coping strategies, followed by their job-hunting plans.

4.5.1 Coping

According to Schlossberg Transition Framework, coping responses are overt and covert behaviours that graduates use to help themselves to control the 'situation' of unemployment, and the meaning and the stress of the 'situation' that can happen before, during or after the stressful 'situation' (Schlossberg, 1999). In the exploration of the coping responses that participant utilise to prevent and respond to the very stressful unemployment 'situation' post-graduation, the following themes emerged from the data.

4.5.1.1 Bad habits

The external labour market experienced a shift in the early 2000s where excessive demands have been placed on a highly-skilled labour force that is highly productive and technologically advanced (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015, Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010; Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Yu, 2013). This meant that graduates reserve high expectations to secure employment relatively easier and faster upon obtaining a university qualification than uneducated youth of the country (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015, Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Yu, 2013). Also, because of obtaining a prestigious university qualification, graduates may also have other expectations about the progression and the quality of their lives.

> *So it's not a positive thing that I'm unemployed cause I had expectation as well. I thought by now I would be working, I would be getting stuff done for myself instead of depending on my parents still after graduating. So it's nerve wracking actually* (Interviewee 8).

> *Hmm... you see; you have certain expectations. (...). It (being unemployed) changes how you perceive things because of the expectations that you have of being employed. (...). I'm trying to say being unemployed changes everything. There are places that you thought that you would go to that you don't go to (*Interviewee 6).

Going through this nonevent transition therefore challenges all these expectations that graduates reserved. It calls for the formulating of coping strategies to deal with the disappointment of failing to secure employment. From the data, a prominent theme that emerged in relations to attempting to deal with the expectation that graduates have was that of engaging in negative coping strategies.

> *Having too much free time, you can fall into bad habits like sleeping longer than you should be, sleeping late waking up late, not actually doing things that you should be doing, you spend the most of your day sitting watching TV, or doing something unconstructive. So there's that like you can either flourish and do the things you wanted to do but after a while, I mean the longer it takes the more frustrated you become and the more you start falling into bad habits* (Interviewee 5).

> *I slept a lot, hey. I slept because now if you don't have much to do. You might as well pass the time with sleep* (Interviewee 2).

> *... the more free-time you have without engaging in anything the more distracted you become. Those are just the basics of life generally. It's not like we want to do drugs or anything. We do not want to be in those situations, trust me, but when you have nothing else to do that's what you end up doing* (Interviewee 4).

Not only are sleeping longer hours and using drugs to cope with the effects of unemployment problematic coping strategies; they also have been shown by research to pose negative consequences for the individual and sometimes the people around them. Oversleeping has been associated with neurological syndromes which can result in structural, biochemical or electrical abnormalities in the brain, spinal cord or other nerves (Opigo & Woodrow, 2009). Moreover, people who oversleep have also been found to be susceptive to depressive symptoms (Benazzi, 2005; Mcgrath et al.,1992).

Long term drug or alcohol use may also lead to engagement in other criminal activities which poses negative consequences for the individual but also the community at large (Uddin & Uddin, 2013; Wilkinson et al., 2017). For these reasons, adopting these problematic strategies

as coping mechanisms to lessen the effects of unemployment among graduates is undesirable. Graduates need to be encouraged to find positive alternative habits such as volunteering their time to community service organisations to pass time.

4.5.1.2 Accepting reality

Another prominent theme that emerged was that of accepting the reality in which participants find themselves.

> *I think acceptance is one. Beyond anything you have to accept where you at, because once you can't accept were you are in life, there is absolutely no way you can't move forward without knowing where you are coming from* (Interviewee 4).

> *Being a graduate to being unemployed takes so much and you have to just swallow your pride and just accept where you are. (and that's not obviously an easy thing to do). It's not an easy transition* (Interviewee 1).

For these participants, accepting their reality allows them to attempt to move forward in their transition and ultimately cope with being unemployed in an effective and constructive manner. According to Schlossberg (1999), these individuals are engaging in palliative behaviours as a measure of coping with the transition from graduation to unemployment. These behaviours are intended to minimize the graduate's distress in relation to finding themselves unemployed post-graduation. By accepting the situation, graduates can therefore move to higher level coping behaviors which are instrumental behaviours that attempt to change the situation (Schlossberg, 1999).

This is because if an individual has not accepted their reality, especially for a stressful and frustration situation like unemployment post-graduation, the individual is more likely to employ defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, wishful thinking, and sublimation to cope with the stressful situation (Anderson et al., 2012). All of these serve to delay the graduate from effectively dealing with the situation and consequently engaging in instrumental behaviours that will enable them to successfully negotiate the transition.

4.4.1.1.1 Being positive

Linked with accepting reality was a strong sense of trying to keep a positive mindset regardless of the stressful situation that unemployment is for graduates. Being positive for participants involved a mixture of an attitude of not giving up and also being grateful for other things that they still have. This included acknowledging their university qualification and being grateful that their basic survival needs are met.

> *Always just saying (thinking)… you know what, I might be here but I know that things will work out eventually. I am not meant to be here forever, you know. There is a better place, there is a light at the end of the tunnel* (Interviewee 1).

> *In this regards, I can say I try not consume myself in negative. (…). . But for me personally, I try to not give up yet. It's only been 6 months now* (Interviewee 8).

> *No. you see what I've acquired now, I don't want to waste. It's good that I acquired the BA. People of my age don't have BAs, it's a good thing for myself. Finding a job will be a bonus. (…). It's very sad man. It's very, very sad but I'm still hoping that something will come up* (Interviewee 3).

So yes you frustrated because you can't afford to live, yes you frustrated because of…but things could be worse. You could be living on the streets, you could be wondering where your next meal is coming from, you could be destitute like completely without any support structure. (…). I'm still not giving up to finding employment and that's a good thing (Interviewee 5).

Given the high unemployment rates in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2017), it is crucial that graduates do not lose hope in finding employment. Giving up the search for employment could pose detrimental consequences not only for the graduates themselves, but for their communities as well. In their families graduate unemployment has the potential to result in abuse, family conflict and decrease family cohesion (De Witte et al., 2012). By giving up the search for employment or immersing oneself in the negative mindset about unemployment, graduates and their families risk experiencing this type of friction which may also spill over to the broader community.

Remaining positive in the face of a stressful transition such as unemployment is evident of coping responses that control the meaning of the situation as to cognitively neutralize the stressful situation (Schlossberg, 1999). This is done through identifying positive aspects about the situation which can only be done once the individual has accepted their reality. Individuals

are also able to realise that they are not personally responsible for the situation and therefore shift the blame from themselves (Anderson et al., 2012). These graduates are drawing from a temporary frame of reference of positive comparison such as the famous expression as 'count your blessings' (Schlossberg, 1999).

4.4.1.1.2 Lowering employment expectations

Some other participants indicated that they lowered their employment expectations after relocating back home. Whilst at university, graduates are noted to have reserved expectations about the world of work and especially salary expectations (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Oluwajodi et al., 2015; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012). Likewise, participants in the study also had expectations about the type of job they are seeking and salaries that they believed they are entitled. They were not willing to give up on these expectations until the reality of being an unemployed graduate was presented to them. Here, some of the participants have become realistic and lowered their employment expectation out of desperation.

> *When you at the township, you just looking for employment anywhere there is space for you and it doesn't matter where that is. It could be Pick n' Pay or anywhere, you will not care as long as there is space for you. this is reality of life and these small things change your whole perspective. It's just messed up* (Interviewee 1).
>
> *You even lower your expectations, you know. I am willing now to take anything. I use to think that I want to earn R20 grands (R20 000) as a starting job (chuckles). I mean I put in all the efforts, I deserve that 20 grand per month, you know. It's heart breaking. (...). I will mop the floor to get to where I want (*Interviewee 1).

4.5.1.3 Keeping busy

As discussed above, one major characteristic of the transition from graduation to unemployment is having more free time. This come with the role change from being a student where you had lectures and assignments that occupied most of their time to now relocating home and having less to do. Some participants indicated that because of this abundance of free time, they fell into bad habits such as sleeping longer hours and watching the television all day. However, other participants indicated that they try to keep busy during this period by occupying their time with positive things that have turned into hobbies.

Like now you know financial institutions, banks and insurance they want someone who has done RE5 so I'm trying to study RE5, yes. That is what I'm doing, I'm studying. (…). Yeah I read a lot, maybe it's becoming a hobby now to read. There's a gym there in Sebokeng, so I try to exercise. (Interviewee 3).

Is there anything I can do for free to volunteer my time, you know. You will be surprised people are saying that I have been looking for somebody to unpack the books, or I need…ok you say you can tutor? I have Grade 8s here, how good is your Maths, you know. That's how you can also pass your time and that's something that you can also put back on your CV. It's so fulfilling giving something back also. (…). Besides coping, yes, I am saying it is a mechanism I guess I utilised to cope with my experiences at the time. Besides, what else could I do because I didn't enjoy being at home. (Interviewee 1).

I go to gym. It's not really coping but it helps to take my mind of things. So I try and keep healthy, it just makes you feel good somehow (Interviewee 4).

*There things you do with the time that you have and how you sharpen or whatever your skills. So sitting reading and gaining knowledge while not being employed. (…). Building knowledge and exercising your brain daily it helps you, it's a form of escapism so I just have to rely on those coping mechanism. Like feeling down? go and exercise, take a walk, get some endorphins (*Interviewee 5).

The third type of coping after modifying the situation and controlling the meaning of the problem is responses that assist the individual to manage the stress resulting from a transition according to Schlossberg (1999). Keeping busy by either volunteering one's time, empowering oneself, or exercising is a form of this coping response. It is further a palliative behaviour that ought to minimize the graduate's distress just like accepting one's reality. When you keep busy, you are less consumed by the stress of being unemployed. Furthermore, you empower yourself through the engagement in positive and constructive activities as indicated by the participants in the study.

There was one participant in the study who indicated that volunteering time to charity organisations is not as easy as one would expect. They indicated that although they are interested in volunteering their time whilst unemployed as a measure of keeping busy whilst also giving back to the community, charity organisation can make volunteering one's time difficult.

who knew that volunteering for stuff is so difficult. Try and ask organisations to come and help with some kids, they will make you jump through hoops (Interviewee 5).

An argument can be made that it is this kind of rejection on top of being rejected for employment that graduates into negative coping strategies. Uddin and Uddin (2013), and Wilkinson et al. (2013) note that unemployed graduates may engage in substance abuse, and other criminal activities when faced with rejection. This is because graduates may have limited alternatives to engage in constructive acts that do not require financial resources.

Engagement in these destructive activities subsequently lowers the odds of the graduates to securing employment in the labour market because of the decline in their health and quality of physical and mental wellbeing (Uddin & Uddin, 2013). De Witte et al. (2012) note that the negative effects of unemployment are worsened when graduates perceive low sense of social support that is available to the graduates to navigate this transition. Denying graduates opportunities to make positive contribution in the community can therefore be considered a lack of support.

4.5.2 Direct action plans

Participants responded to questions about the direct actions that they are taking to deal with unemployment and their job-hunting plans strategies for securing employment in the labour market. The following considerations emerged.

4.5.2.1 Curriculum Vitae

The first thing that graduates pay special attention to is putting together their CVs. They recognise that employers make their first impression on you based on the presentation of your CV. Therefore, taking extra time to prepare one's CV is paramount for success in the labour market.

> *So what I so is, I keep my CV as relevant, as updated, as focused to the particular company that I was applying at. (…). So I unpacked my degree and subjects that I did in the last 3 years and Honours, you know. I am going to take a completely different angle to what I am doing and try to market myself in as best as I can. (thinking)… so I unpack my degree and I said you know what, what are my skills within this degree? I am a Tutor, I am a Researcher, you know. I am an Analyst, I am a Writer, you know.*

*(thinking)… I am a Social Activist, you know. So those are the roles and those are the skills which I can offer, with what I have been given (*Interviewee 1).

Also setting up your CV, I mean that is the first thing that you need to do is setting up your CV. Knowing which format to use, the dos and don'ts, having a general structure of a cover letter for a CV but also knowing how to read through a post and then apply my skills and the also refer to skills that may not necessarily be in your qualifications. Because they know that you've studies Politics or International Relations, but they that you have a keen eye for detail or you have this or that. Just also trying to market yourself I think that was the hardest part, but it's also part of the process trying to find employment (Interviewee 5).

Then I would have to change the way I do things or the way I'm applying or maybe I should edit my CV maybe there's something wrong with my CV (Interviewee 8).

Undoubtable, an applicant's CV forms part of the major determinants of the success of them in the labour market. Having a good, detailed but concise CV puts job applicants one step closer to being called for an interview. Participants in this study recognised this and therefore can be argued to being on the right path in terms of job-hunting strategies that may ensure the securement of employment.

In line with this, Jansen (2012) in his paper about jobless graduates highlights the importance a graduate's CV in securing employment in the labour market. He especially notes that in preparing a CV, graduates must ensure that their CVs are free from spelling errors avoiding presenting a 'sloppy CV'. It should showcase voluntary work and membership to youth associations, academic qualification and marks, and technical skills and other skills relevant to the job that you have acquired from your degree (Jansen, 2012). Universities, perhaps should incorporate CV writing workshops where basic CV writing techniques can be taught to graduates whilst at university.

4.5.2.2 Online applications

Upon successfully preparing their CVs, participants needed to ensure that it gets to as many people as possible who can potentially offer them employment in the labour market. For this, participants relied heavily on online applications, particularly making us of career portals.

I actually sit down because I do that every day and look for jobs on the internet. Register my CV on about 5 of these agencies that actually advertise jobs. I have a process. (…). I have a list and try to send a minimum of 4 or 3 application per day if I can find appropriate jobs. (…). When you come back the following day and see that nothing much has changed still the same jobs and then after a while you take a different approach to it. Then maybe skip 2 or 3 days to see if I can't get more out of my job search. (Interviewee 2).

You literally have a plan that, ok every day I would apply to at least 5 different positions or I would look for things… or you would set out time and say in my day within the 8 hours I have I will set 4 or 5 hours to looking for employment and then the rest to my own wellbeing but it doesn't always happen consistently every day and it's very. (…). Like registering to your career portals, your career 24, Career Junction, Pnet is also quite good. Those different things, so applying for those things (Interviewee 5).

I prefer online applications even emails are so much better than this posting thing. (…). How do I put this? a portal or a profile of a company so-and-so on social media then you will see if they have job vacancies for you or not. I think that should do (Interviewee 10).

I use a lot of websites and employment agencies via internet. My strategies are internet based, company websites (Interviewee 8).

Some participants indicated the struggle of maintaining an online presence when applying for jobs because of insufficient resources. As discussed earlier, when graduates relocate back home post-graduation, their access to the internet is minimized drastically as opposed to when they were still students in university.

Yeah, it's stressing sometimes you don't have enough funds to go to internet then it's time wasted not doing nothing but luckily I read, so it's very sad honestly. (…). Yes, Sebokeng does not have many facilities, yes more things are based in CBS's (Interviewee 3).

Now it's very difficult to look for a job, because you relaying on the newspaper there's an old man who's staying not far from here. He gets a newspaper every Sunday and he would call me to get the newspaper and I would check If there's no vacancies. There and the amount of time you spend on the internet is extremely limited (Interviewee 6).

These findings are supported by Baldry (2013) who suggest, "graduate employers should be aware that their online application processes bear heavy costs, especially for those living far from an internet café, and in this regard online recruitment processes are often unaffordable to

poor graduates, thereby driving a cycle of poverty whereby poor graduate are unable to apply for these jobs and as a result less likely to secure employment" (p. 84)

Other participants found ways of working around this lack of resources at home. They recognise the impact of lacking financial resources and found alternative means.

> *I believe where there is a will, there is a way. It might take time, yes. But there is always a way. I mean the local clinic has free Wi-Fi, you know* (Interviewee 4).

> *That's something that's instant, it's on my phone. I can view it anywhere I want; I can apply online using my phone. (…). There is free internet, (thinking)… at certain places, you know. That's the other thing as a graduate you need to get out there, you know. You need to go to libraries, the local libraries. If there is a local library that is at least around 5km away from you to access the Wi-Fi (*Interviewee 1).

> ***Interviewer:*** *Just with the internet how are you accessing your internet now that you back home?*
> ***Interviewee:*** *Via my cell phone, and then other application will require me to use a PC of which will have to go to an internet café or where I can get Wi-Fi* (Interviewee 8).

The use of online application has grown immensely with technological advancements of the workplace (Oluwajodi et al., 2015). Applying online remains the number choice for seeking employment in the labour market in the current study. Baldry (2013), however, notes that employment in the labour market is seldom secured through solely online applications and is maximized when social networks are available. This may suggest that the participant's efforts to look for employment online might not yield desired outcomes regardless of the number of hours they spend online. Graduates need to invest significant time into building their social networks along with online strategies if they wish to maximize employment opportunities. The importance of social networks has already been discussed earlier.

4.5.2.3 Relocating

Several participants considered relocating from their current residential area in order to look for and secure employment in the labour market.

> ***Interviewer:*** *when you come back from Lesotho you going maybe to try and relocate there?* ***Interviewee:*** *Yeah, relocate, possibility, but the expenses it's going to be constrains. (…). I want to leave this place and move to maybe CBD's (*Interviewee 3).

> *So if I'm at Cape Town… Cape Town is fresh, there is a lot of small business that are looking for people that are creative and thinks outside the box. So it makes it easier for me if I'm not at Joburg. Because Joburg, we all applying at the same place, honestly like when there is a vacancy, everyone flocks in and it makes it much harder to select people before a vacancy come out already* (Interviewee 9).

It is not surprising that Interviewee 3 indicated that relocating to the Central Business Districts (CBD) of Johannesburg may yield positive outcomes in terms of securing employment. Although he currently resides in Sebokeng which is in Gauteng, it is in a secluded area in the Vaal that is isolated from economic activities of the Johannesburg. As discussed earlier, Johannesburg is the economic hub of South Africa (City of Johannesburg, 2014; Juech, 2014). As such, it is expected that most employment opportunities would be available in the Johannesburg Metro as the city attracts a lot of business investment. Whether or not this strategy would guarantee success is this case remains debatable.

For instance, even though employment opportunities are significantly higher in cities, which account for over 80 % of economic activity of the country and subsequently 60 % of the national population (CSIR, 2011; Juech, 2014), securing employment in Johannesburg may be even more difficult. This is because Johannesburg experiences a migration of unemployed people from all over South Africa who come to seek employment in the labour market. This means that the competition in the labour market is intensified because more people are attracted to the cities for employment opportunities. Whilst geographic relocation to the cities may be a possible strategy to secure employment for graduates, it also has some strain that often accompanies such moves and is not a guaranteed strategy.

4.5.2.4 Furthering studies

Furthering studies was a prominent theme among participants who held a Humanities degree. They indicated that they are hopeful that studying further will enhance their employability in the labour market. Interviewee 10 also indicated that she was considering pursuing a different major and drop her degree major.

Interviewer: *So next year you registering to study do you have funds for that?*
Interviewee: *I will see; I just want to see if they will accept me in this Psychiatric Nursing thing. I'll just do something close to Psychology and I won't do the full years because I already have my psychology degree which should help, I think*
Interviewer: *Do you think that if you complete that degree then finding employment would be easier than it is now?*
Interviewee: *I will be easier cause it's a very demanding field, they need nurses especially, Psychiatric field. You know the Psychiatric Hospitals are very packed and they are few of them so they need a lot of help even the Rehabilitation Centre they need some. So I think it's a good route I should have thought about that years back.*

No I always wanted to further my studies to Master's level (Interviewee 3).

In line with these, lack of career guidance emerged from the data as a possible cause of high graduate unemployment rates in South Africa.

True, this orientation thing doesn't work but now they've came up with something better for Grade nine students you sign up a portal with a university they help you from then which subject to choose and what not (Interviewee 10).

Interviewee: *It's a big challenge and I think many candidates now lack career guidance. I don't know if I'm wrong, hmm. or what but I think lack career of guidance is the problem.*
Interviewer: *Can you please elaborate on that for me?*
Interviewee: *I think like I said I've done BA, so they are many unemployed candidates for BA so I cannot advice someone to go and do economics simply because I've seen that… no*
Interviewer: *But then why do you still feel that career guidance is lacking?*
Interviewee: *Because… nah its lacking because from the scratch I don't think Economics is anymore in market* (Interviewee 3).

If I could go back to Matric when I was applying, I would have done BA-LAW. So it's a mix of two degree I have now. So I have a Humanity Degree, but I would have added Law to it. I can still do my post grad in Law. (…). There are certain degrees that have more weight than others. There is a far clearer path in certain degree. If you studied Accounting, Law… (what are the other ones) … being a Doctor or whatever, Engineering. It is like there is a path, there's something that is telling you do that, then you do this, then you do that and you do whatever. So when you just stick your thumb up into the air and decide to study something that doesn't have a clear path, it's more difficult to navigate into find your footing (Interviewee 5).

Extensive research has compared Humanities degree with other professional degrees with the findings that Humanities graduates face more hardships in the labour market when trying to

secure employment (Ama, 2008; Baldry, 2013; Oluwajodi et al., 2015; Van Schalkwyk & Surujlal, 2012; Yu, 2013). It therefore comes as no surprise that participants in this study who held Humanities related degrees considered changing majors. This remains the case even though the findings by Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services (2017) indicated that in fact Humanities graduates secured employment in the labour market quicker and in high quantities compared to professional qualification faculties such as Law, Health Sciences, Commerce, Engineering and Built Environment graduates.

On the other hand, numerously empirical evidence has suggested findings that are contrary to those obtained by Analytics and Institutional Research Unit Business Intelligence Services (2017). Therefore, Humanities graduates that are considering studying further are being realistic and proactive about their chances of securing employment in the labour market. It is not unheard of for Humanities graduates to pursue Master's degree qualifications out of frustration of being unemployed (Baldry, 2013).

The reality of Humanities graduates in the labour market has been shown to be resulting from a lack of career guidance to which the participants in the study alluded. Higher learning institution have been criticized for providing inadequate career guidance to Humanities graduates especially whilst in university (Oluwajodu et al., 2015; Van Schalkwkyk & Surujlal, 2012). Having proper career guidance earlier in a student's university years may ensure they choose majors that are in highly sought after and in demand in the labour market. This way, students would choose majors knowing exactly their odds of obtaining employment post-graduation. If they choose to still pursue majors that are not in high demand in the labour market, they at least would do so having been given information about the state of the labour market.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined as well as discussed the findings of the study. This was guided by the Schlossberg 4 S's Transition Framework (Schlossberg, 1995). A summary of the results is shown in Appendix H. The themes in the study were theoretically developed (that is, top down theoretical approach) based on this framework as well as developed from a bottom-up inductive approach where room was left for themes to evolve outside the 4S framework. Therefore, the following themes emerged under 'situation', relocating back home, concurrent stress, previous experience with a similar transition, control, and assessment. Under 'self', the following themes emerged, perceived facilitators, perceived hindrances, race, gender, and age. The theme of support structures emerged under 'support'. and lastly, under 'strategies', the following themes emerged, coping and direct action plans.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE STUDY

The final chapter of this research report comprised of the research study's conclusion as well as the limitations of the study, implications for future research, and a reflexive comment.

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of the research was to use the Schlossberg's Transition Theory to explore the transition from graduation to employment from the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates that are still navigating this transition. Based on the various themes that emerged in this study, it is clear that the transition from graduation to employment for graduates that still remain unemployed is a fraught transition. It is a frustrating and emotionally taxing transition as graduates had not anticipated that they will remain unemployed for a long period of time after they graduate with a university qualification. Further, the frustration of being unemployed is escalated to the experience of negative emotions and psychological distress when the graduates relocate back home to their communities.

Once at home, graduates are confronted with the expectations and disappointment of their families, peers and the community at large. While some people recognise and applaud the graduates for the accomplishment of their university qualifications, the graduates perceived that most people look down upon them and question the relevance of the effort they put into acquiring those degrees if they will still remain unemployed. These expectations and remarks from the community and family members make the experience of being unemployed unbearable for many graduates.

In this regard, graduates cope with the transition by relying on the support that they get especially from their immediate family members and close friends who provide emotional and financial support. As a results of the high support that graduates receive, they are able to focus their resources and energy on empowering themselves through engaging in highly constructive activities such as volunteering their time, exercise, reading and seeking employment in the labour market without any other additional stressors. Furthermore, it was found that there is a strong drive from the graduates to create employment for themselves instead of relying on the external labour market for employment opportunities.

All of this reflected the coping strategies that graduates employ in order to navigate the transition from graduation to employment. It would seem that the 4 S's framework is interlinked because the graduates coping strategies identified in the study were closely linked to the support that is available to the graduates to navigate the transition of unemployment. Furthermore, job-hunting strategies were also closely linked to relying on other people such as networking with university social networks in order to look for employment in the labour market. Aside from relying on support structures, graduates also utilised the internet extensively for looking for employment. Although, it comes with its challenges, it also provides graduates with ease of access to information about employment opportunities in the labour market.

Owning to the very racialized history of the country, it was found that graduates struggle to secure employment because of perceived white privilege that is dominant in the labour market. Above being disadvantaged in the labour market compared to graduates from other racial groups, it was found that female graduates struggle more than male graduates. In this regard, the country still has a long way to go in terms of eliminating discrimination in the workplace and ensuring equal representation of the previously disadvantaged groups in the workplace and labour market.

Based on the analysis of the data and various themes that emerged, the researcher concludes that Schlossberg (1995) 4 S's transition framework is a useful theoretical framework for investigating the experiences of unemployed graduates as they transitioning from university to employment. The variables 'situation' and 'self' have exposed the experiences and realities of being an unemployed graduate; whilst the variable 'support' and 'strategies' have exposed coping mechanisms both with the experiences and seeking employment in the labour market.

Not only does the model allow us to describe in detail the difficulties and challenges experienced by graduates, but further, the model captures the processes and action undertaken by graduates to engage with and manage their situations. In this way, rather than portraying graduates as only subject to their environment and in some way victims of their circumstance, we are able to display the agency and action of individuals actively negotiating their transitions.

5.2 Limitations

This research has some limitations that need to be taken into consideration for the determination of the validity of the study. Firstly, the qualitative research design of the study resulted a small number of sample from a very specific geographical area. Although, this meant that rich descriptions and interpretations of the data can be achieved; it also meant that the generalisability of the research findings is jeopardised. Furthermore, there was little variety in terms of the ethnicity of the sample as all of the participants where African. Possibly greater distinction in the experiences and coping strategies of unemployed graduates would have been achieved if participants from non-African racial groups where accessed. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the larger population of unemployed graduates in South Africa and other contexts.

With the sample that was accessed, another limitation was the use of the English language for conducting the interview. Although the participants were encouraged to speak in the language that is most comfortable to them, English was still the dominant language in all the interviews. As a results, some participants may have struggled expressing themselves fully. This could pose implications for the depth of responses and richness of the data obtained in the study. Additionally, because all the participants were interviewed face-to-face, this meant that maintaining anonymity was not possible. Face-to-face interviews may also result in participants giving socially desirable responses. The researcher probed further for clarity to avoid such responses.

5.3 Implications for future research

This study has portrayed that the Schlossberg 4 S's transition framework is a useful theoretical framework for investigating the experiences of unemployed graduates as they transition from university to employment. It became apparent in the analysis of the data, however, that the 4 S's may overlap with each other. For this reason, separating the four variables of the framework, that is, 'situation', 'self', 'support', and 'strategies' into distinct variables becomes in some sense artificial distinctions. For example, when discussing the 'support' that participants drew from to cope with the transition from graduation to employment, 'strategies' that they employed to look for employment in the labour market were also implicated. Future

research exploring this topic considering the intersection of several resources domains is necessary.

Furthermore, future research conducted to explore unemployed graduates transition to employment whilst they remain unemployed must consider broadening the sample to include graduates from other racial groups other than African. This may offer diverse perceptions of the hiring practices in the labour market especially. In the same breath, future research must also explore from the unemployed graduate's perspective, the factors that they believe contributes to high graduate unemployment rates in South Africa over and above those discussed under Chapter 1 of the current study.

5.4 Reflexive comments

The biggest shortfall for qualitative research design is the heavy reliance on the research as a research instrument. The researcher interacted face-to-face with the participants for data collection in the form of interviews and this may pose practical implications for the quality of data that was extracted from the participants. Researchers must be aware of their own experiences and socially constructed realities which may interfere with their role as a neutral instrument in the research study (Smith, 1994). This refers to the practice of reflexivity within quantitative research. "It is an inevitable consequence of engaging in research with people, and it can be harnessed as a valuable part of research exercise itself" (Smith, 1994, p. 244).

For this study, the researcher was an African female in her early twenties. All the participants in the study were African as well. Because of this, the researcher did not experience major difficulties in getting the participants to agree to being interviewed for purposes of the study. The researcher suspect that this was because of the sense of identification with the researcher. From the first contact the researcher had with participants, they were friendly, warm and eager to assist the researcher by participating in the study. Participants indicated that having graduated themselves, they are aware of the challenges associated with fulfilling course requirements for graduation purposes.

During the interviewing phase, some participants, especially male participants tried flirting with the researcher and this could have resulted in socially desirable responses in attempts to impress the researcher. Generally, a majority of the participants felt at ease with the researcher because they too were in their earlier twenties and could relate with the researcher. This was

beneficial to the quality of the data that was collected because the participants felt free to open up and be vulnerable with the researcher.

Further to that, the sense of identification was not only experienced by participants. The researcher also felt a strong sense of identifying with the participants. Specifically, the researcher identified with the social upbringing and conditions of participants, their material conditions such as resources, and their challenges with obtaining employment in the labour market that a majority of the participants experienced as part of their realities. This made the interviewing to be emotionally taxing and psychologically draining for the researcher as she empathized with the participants.

The researcher felt that she understood and shared the participant's feelings about being an unemployed graduate. Again this proved to be beneficial for the study because it made the researcher trustworthy and approachable such that the participants were willing to be vulnerable with the researcher. However, because of this strong sense of identification, the researcher was susceptive to emotional turmoil after some interviews and needed to debrief before conducting the next interview. Having a platform to debrief, that is, writing down the researcher's feelings and emotions after each interview was critical and proved to be valuable for the analysis and interpretation of the data. It ensured that at all times the voice of the participants was portrayed in the interpretation of the data by the researcher instead of her own subjective interpretations.

Qualitative research and thematic content analysis especially is depended heavily the individual skills of the researcher and are therefore more easily influenced by the researcher's own personal history, cultural assumptions, and knowledge which could potential influence the way findings were interpreted. The researcher, therefore, was aware that her involvement in the collection of the data, analysis of the data, interpretation, and the representation of the research findings may have influenced the research process and findings. This is inherent in all qualitative research that the unfolding of the research and findings may be interpreted from a multitude of perspectives depending on who the researcher is and their own personal, cultural assumptions, ideological and knowledge.

To guard against the influences of the researcher's subjectivity experiences and interpretations in the reporting of the results, the researcher tried to report the participant's perceptions in their voices instead of her own. The researcher admits that this was not easy because of the strong feelings of identification with the participants and concerns that she might suffer the same fate

as the participant in the labour market upon graduating. Writing down the researcher's feelings and thoughts during the entire study help to guide the interpretation of the data to ensure that the researcher is not imposing her subjective opinions and experiences onto the participants. With a platform to debrief, the researcher could remain a neutral instrument in the study.

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Uddin, P. S. O., & Uddin, O. O. (2013). Causes, effects, and solutions to youth unemployment problems in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences, 4(4),* 397-402.

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Appendix A: Career Services at the Wits School of Law

School of Law

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Private Bag 3 Wits 2050, South Africa • Tel: +27 (0)11 717 8429· Fax: +27 (0)11 717 8539 • www.wits.ac.za/law

10th of October 2014

Dear Ms Kunene

Career Services at the Wits School of Law

I refer to the above matter and your correspondence yesterday where you asked that I confirm that the Wits School of Law does host career activities outside of the programme given by CCDU.

I can confirm that Wits School of Law has a number of career activities, including; a multi-day career fair; individual organisation showcase days; and has even made an appointment of a Career Development and Liaison Officer to help and counsel law students on career options.

I have attached here a list of some of the organisations that have participated in our career activities this year.

If there are any queries please let me know.

Appendix B: Letter requesting access

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good Day

My name is Zinhle Kunene and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master's Degree in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of this degree I am required to complete this research and present a report on the information obtained. My research is interested in exploring the transition from graduation to employment and particularly unemployed graduates experiences of finding employment. I am requesting permission to post an advertisement on your website to call for participants in my study.

Participation in this research will involve face-to-face interviews. The interviews will take approximately an hour to complete. Participation is completely voluntary and there will not be any advantages or disadvantages in any way for choosing to participant or not participate in the study. Feedback will be given in the form of a summary of the overall findings of the research to the participants by email.

Anonymity cannot be guaranteed as face-to-face interviews will be conducted. However, confidentiality of the participants will be maintained by restricting access to the interview material (tapes and transcripts) to any person other than my supervisor and the researcher. Furthermore, all responses will be kept confidential, and no information that identifies the participants will be included in the research report and transcripts. The tape records will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. Participants may refuse to answer any questions if they would prefer not to, and may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Please contact either me or my supervisor should you have any further questions or concerns. If you wish to meet with me for a discussion and/or wish to see a copy of my interview schedule, please feel free to contact me and I will meet with you and/or provide you with interview details.

Kind Regards

Zinhle Kunene

Email: prozinhle@ymail.com

082 734 6167

Supervisor: Ian Siemers

Email: ian.siemers@wits.ac.za

(011)717 4586

Appendix C: Participation Information Sheet

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good day

My name is Zinhle Kunene, and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. The main aim of the study is to understand how unemployed graduates move through the transition of graduation to employment. The study will explore the transition from graduation to employment of unemployed graduates. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participating in this research will entail being interviewed by myself, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately one hour. With your permission this interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. Therefore you will be asked to complete consent forms to record the interview and to participate in the study. You will also be asked to complete a biographical information form that will be used for sampling purposes only.

Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not to participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that identifies you would be included in the research report and transcripts. The interview material (tapes and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by any person, and will only be processed by myself and my supervisor. The tape recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

If you choose to participate in this study, please contact me telephonically on 082 734 6167 or via email at prozinhle@ymail.com

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge in South Africa on graduate employability, employment and unemployment.

Kind Regards

Zinhle Kunene
Email: prozinhle@ymail.com
082 734 6167

Supervisor: Ian Siemers
Email: ian.siemers@wits.ac.za
(011) 717 4586

Appendix D: Consent Form for Interview

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I _____ consent to being interviewed by **Zinhle Kunene** for her study on **Transitioning from Graduation to Employment: Unemployed Graduates Experiences of Finding Employment**.

I understand that:

- Participating in this interview is voluntary.
- That I may refuse to answer questions I would prefer not to.
- I may with withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and all my responses will remain confidential.

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix E: Consent Form for Recording

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I _____ consent to my interview with **Zinhle Kunene** for her study on **Transitioning from Graduation to Employment: Unemployed Graduates Experiences of Finding Employment** to be tape-recorded.

I understand that:

 The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person besides the researcher and her supervisor, and will only be processed by the researcher.

 All tape recording will be destroyed after they have been transcribed.

 No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix F: Consent Form for Using Quotes

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I _____ consent to have my interview material quoted by **Zinhle Kunene** for her research report on **Transitioning from Graduation to Employment: Unemployed Graduates Experiences of Finding Employment**.

I understand that:

 My input in terms of the materials to be used for quotes is voluntary.

 That I may refuse to have my input quoted if I would prefer to.

 I may choose to identify any material not be quoted in the research report.

 No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and all my responses will remain confidential.

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MORG/17/004 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Transitioning from graduation to employment: unemployed graduates experiences of finding employment
INVESTIGATORS	Kunene Zinhle
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	27/06/17
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 27 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON
(Dr Colleen Bernstein)

cc Supervisor:

Mr Ian Siemers
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix H: Interview Schedule

Good day

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. If you feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview, please let me know and please ask any questions that you may have.

1. What is your gender?

□ Female □ Male

2. Age _____

3. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

□ Asian □ Black □ Coloured □ Indian □ White □ other (please specify) _____

3. Which university qualification do you possess?

□ Degree □ Honours Degree □ Master's Degree □ Ph.D. Degree □ other (please specify) _____

4. Year and month of Graduation: _____

5. Institution of graduation: _____

6. Field of study and major: _____

7. Length of unemployment since graduation till now: _____

8. Area of resident: _____

9. Living arrangement: _____

How long after graduation did you anticipate it would take before you found employment?

□ Please describe fully your experience of being an unemployed graduate?
□ Please describe fully your experience of looking for employment (job hunting)?
□ Please describe fully the techniques you are using for finding employment?

Do you do anything to try and cope with being unemployed?

What are your strategies for looking for employment?

 Do you have any support or assistance to help with being unemployed?

- What do they do?
- How do they help?

Situation

 Please describe fully the characteristics of the transition from university to employment as an unemployed graduate?

The next questions will be used as probes depending on how the participants answered the main question:

- What aspects, if any, can you control in your attempt to cope with unemployment and looking for employment and what aspects can you not control? (Control)
- Have you ever attempted to look for employment before you graduated, and if so, was your experience helpful or harmful? (Previous experience with similar situation)
- Are you experiencing stress in other areas of your life because of being an unemployed graduate? (concurrent stress)
- Do you view the situation that you are in as positive, negative or neutral? (Assessment)

Self

- What do you see as your strengths?
- What are the attributes that will to help you find employment in the labour market?
- What do you see as your weaknesses?
- What are the attributes that hinder your attempt to find employment in the labour market?
- How does your race affect your attempts to find employment? Have you encountered race stereotypes?
- How does your gender affect your attempts to find employment? Have you encountered gender stereotypes?
- How does your age affect your attempts to find employment? Have you encountered age stereotypes?

Support

- Who supports you in coping with unemployment and looking for employment and in what ways do they give you support?

 The support from home and other external support

- Do you have any person/institution that is supporting you, and what kind of person/institution is this?
- Do you network? And how easy or difficult is it for you to network for purposes of looking for employment?
- Do you feel that the support given to you in looking for employment is a low or high resource?

Strategies

- What direct action are you taking to deal with your situation?
- What job-hunting plans will you carry out? What behaviour will you change by elimination or improvement?
- Do you feel that you can choose from a range of strategies to cope with the situation?

Thank you for participating in my research. I really appreciate your time and involvement.

Appendix I: Mindworx Academy

Appendix A: Letter requesting access

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Good Day

My name is Zinhle Kunene and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master's Degree in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of this degree I am required to complete this research and present a report on the information obtained. My research is interested in exploring the transition from graduation to employment and particularly unemployed graduates experiences of finding employment. I am requesting permission to utilise the Mindworx Academy platform to invite unemployed graduates to participate in my study.

Participation in this research will involve face-to-face interviews. The interviews will take approximately an hour to complete. Participation is completely voluntary and there will not be any advantages or disadvantages in any way for choosing to participant or not participate in the study. Feedback will be given in the form of a summary of the overall findings of the research to the participants by email.

Anonymity cannot be guaranteed as face-to-face interviews will be conducted. However, confidentiality of the participants will be maintained by restricting access to the interview material (tapes and transcripts) to any person other than my supervisor and the researcher. Furthermore, all responses will be kept confidential, and no information that identifies the participants will be included in the research report and transcripts. The tape records will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. Participants may refuse to answer any questions if they would prefer not to, and may choose to withdraw from the study at any point.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Please contact either me or my supervisor should you have any further questions or concerns. If you wish to meet with me for a discussion and/or wish to see a copy of my interview schedule, please feel free to contact me and I will meet with you and/or provide you with interview details.

Kind Regards

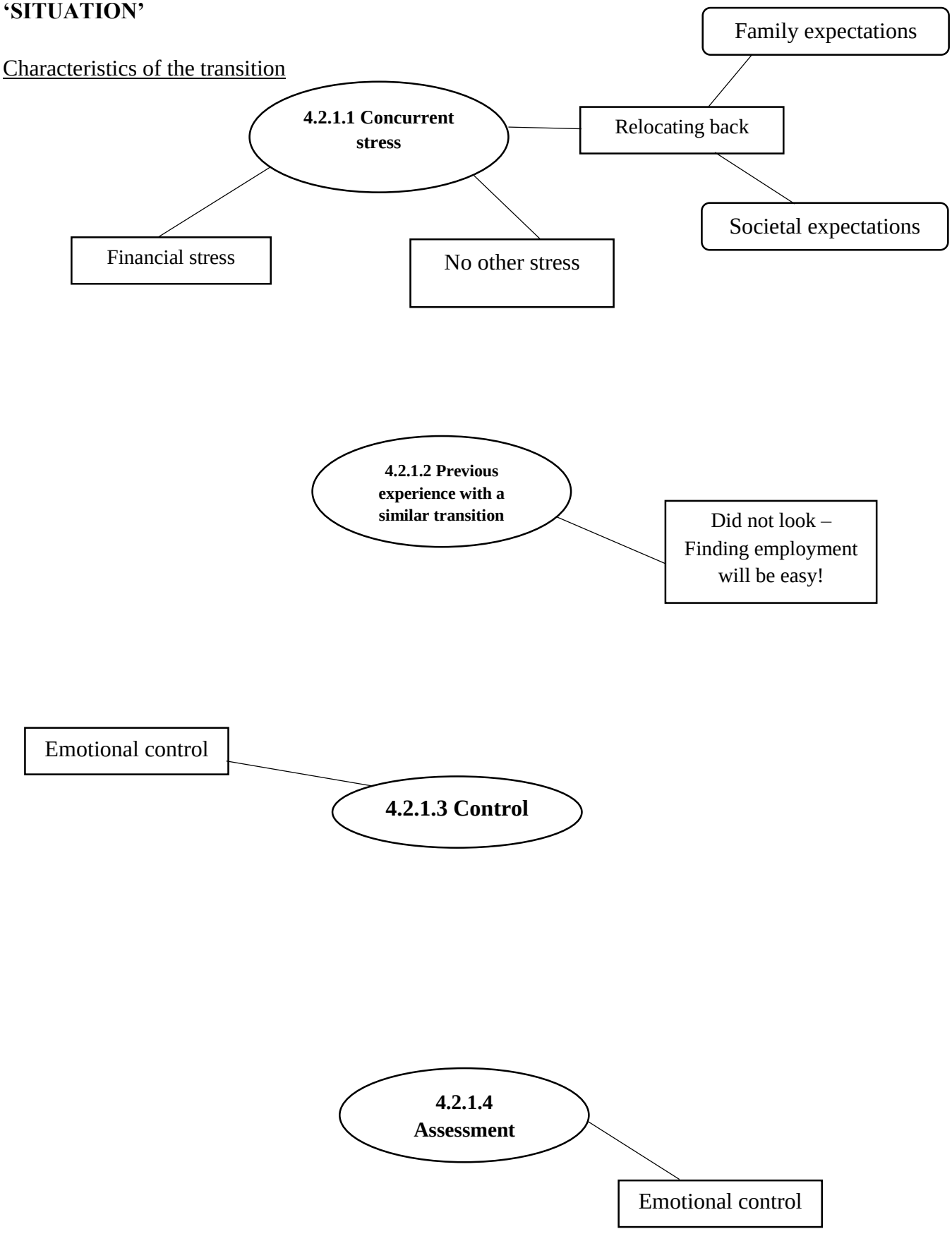
Zinhle Kunene
prozinhle@ymail.com
064 810 9765

Supervisor: Ian Siemers
ian.siemers@wits.ac.za
(011)717 4586

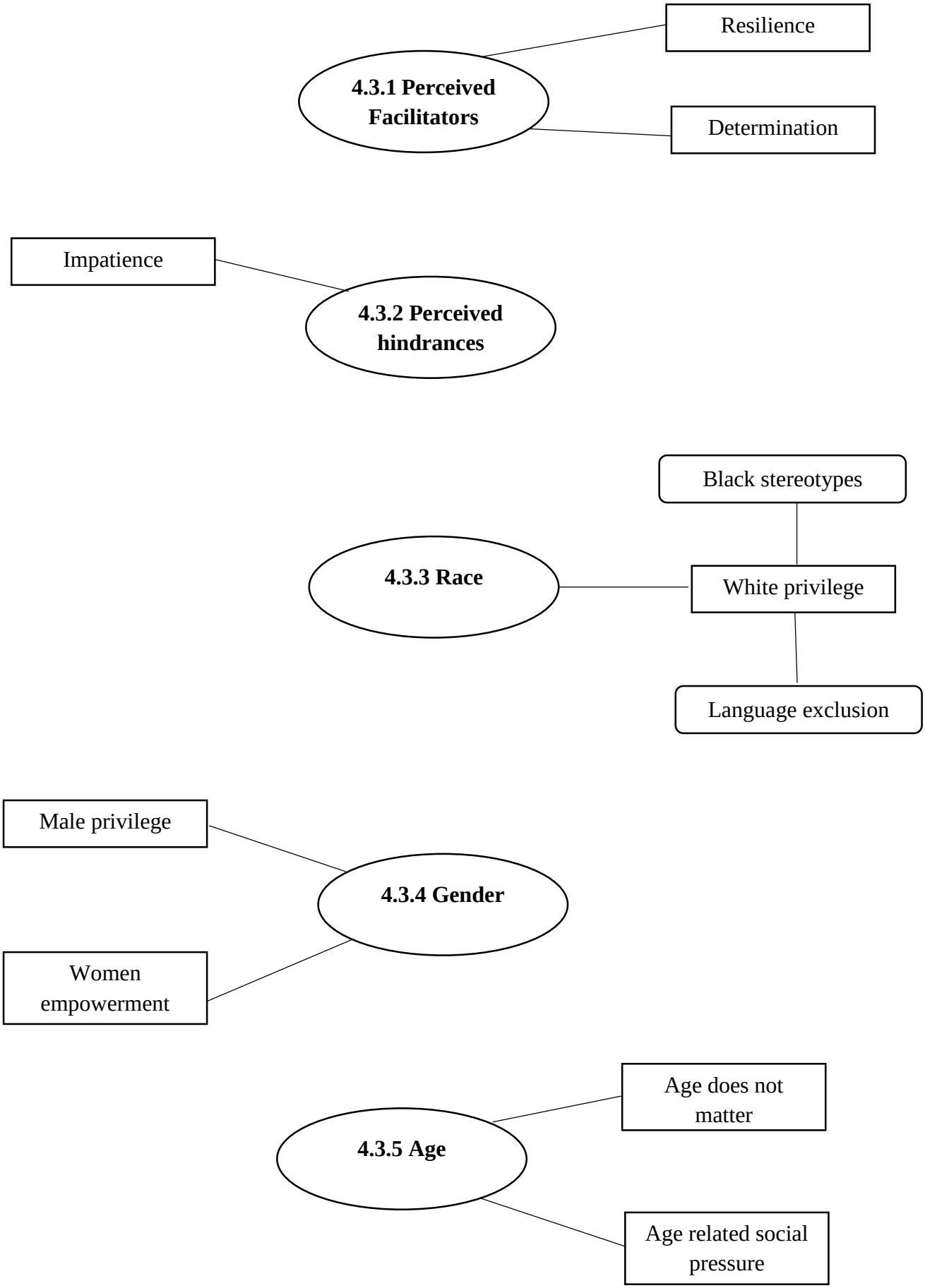
Sabelo Myeni (signed)
Mindworx Academy

Appendix J: Summary of results

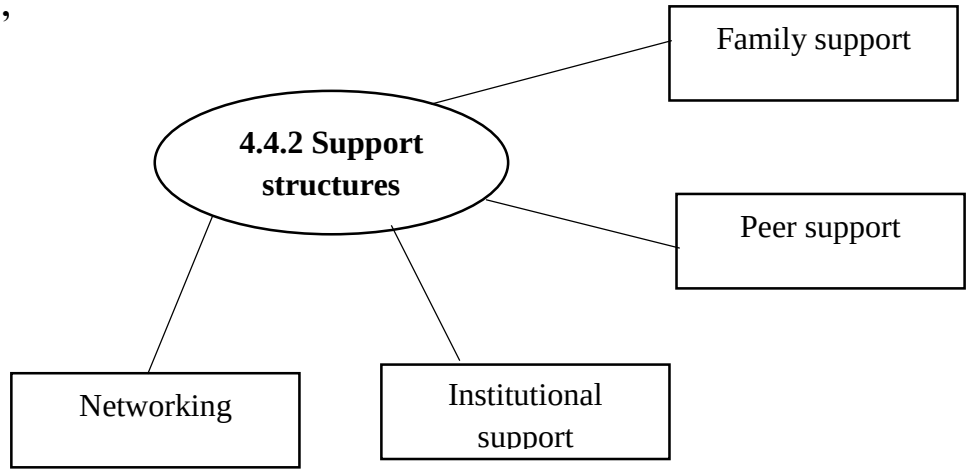
'SITUATION'



'SELF'


Resilience
4.3.1 Perceived Facilitators
Determination
Impatience
4.3.2 Perceived hindrances
Black stereotypes
4.3.3 Race
White privilege
Language exclusion
Male privilege
4.3.4 Gender
Women empowerment
Age does not matter
4.3.5 Age
Age related social pressure

'SUPPORT'



'STRATEGIES'

